

april
2004

patterns

40th edition

Preface

As it has now for 46 years, Patterns presents its readers once again with the best writing and artwork by St. Clair County Community College students. So much for tradition. We are proud and delighted to offer our readers a number of new features to consider. This year, for the first time, we have invited Communication Design students Sarah Ahlquist and Catherine Steinborn to do the layout and design of Patterns; in the years to come we plan to increase student involvement in all aspects of the creation of each issue of Patterns (stay tuned for developments...). Also new this year is the Kathleen Nickerson Award for excellence in poetry. Last year's (45th) edition of Patterns was dedicated to Kathy, and it is our wish to do our part to help keep her memory alive by means of this yearly award. Finally, this year we are honored to bring to our campus two new authors: poet Christine Hume and fiction writer Christina Milletti whose presence as judges and visiting writers contributes a fresh new vision to the Patterns Visiting Artists Forum.

april
2004
patterns
40th edition

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Patrick Bourke Award
 First Place
 Second Place
 Third Place
 Honorable Mention
 Merit

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First Place

Second Place
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First Place
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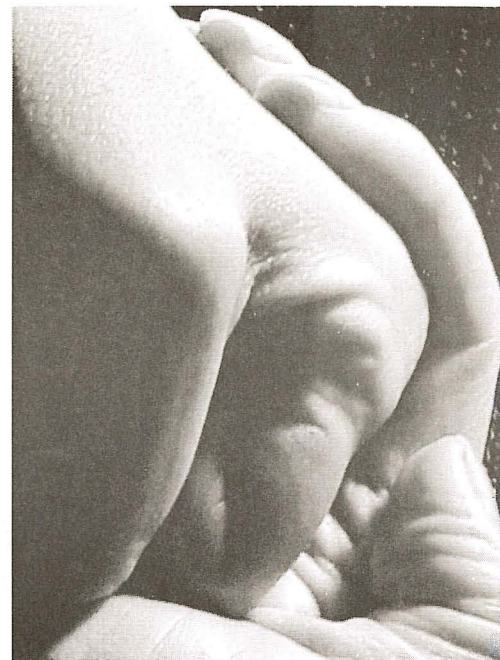
bath

Jody Parmann
Selection of Merit



emotion in motion

Catherine Steinborn



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monday morning
Cathryn M. Jeffers-Goodwine
Selection of Merit

shoes
Christine Shumate



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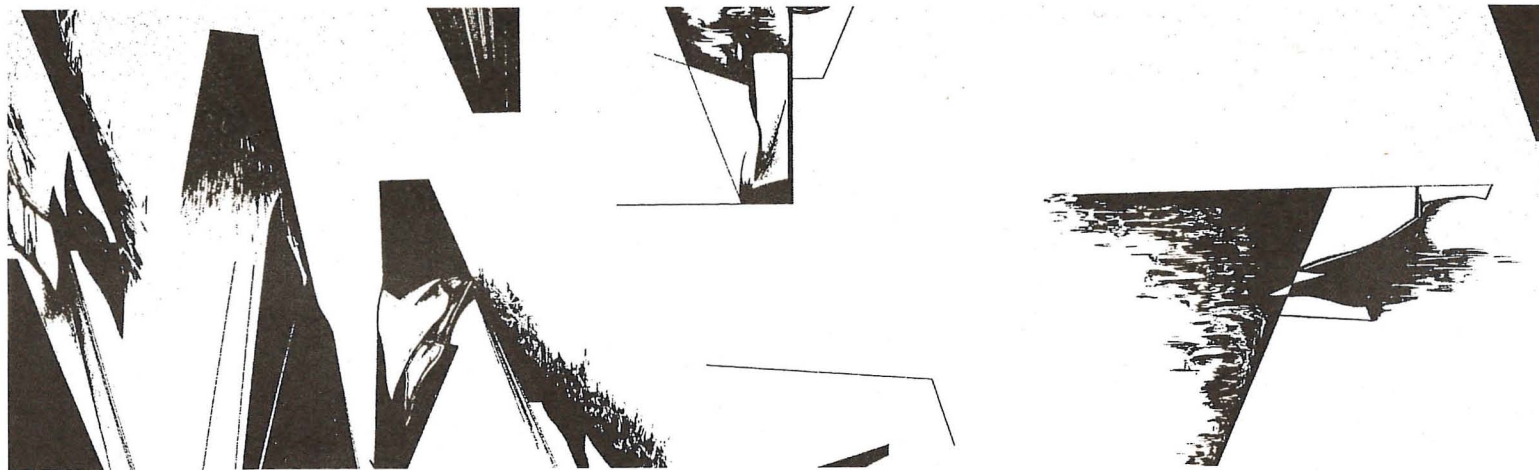


miami in january

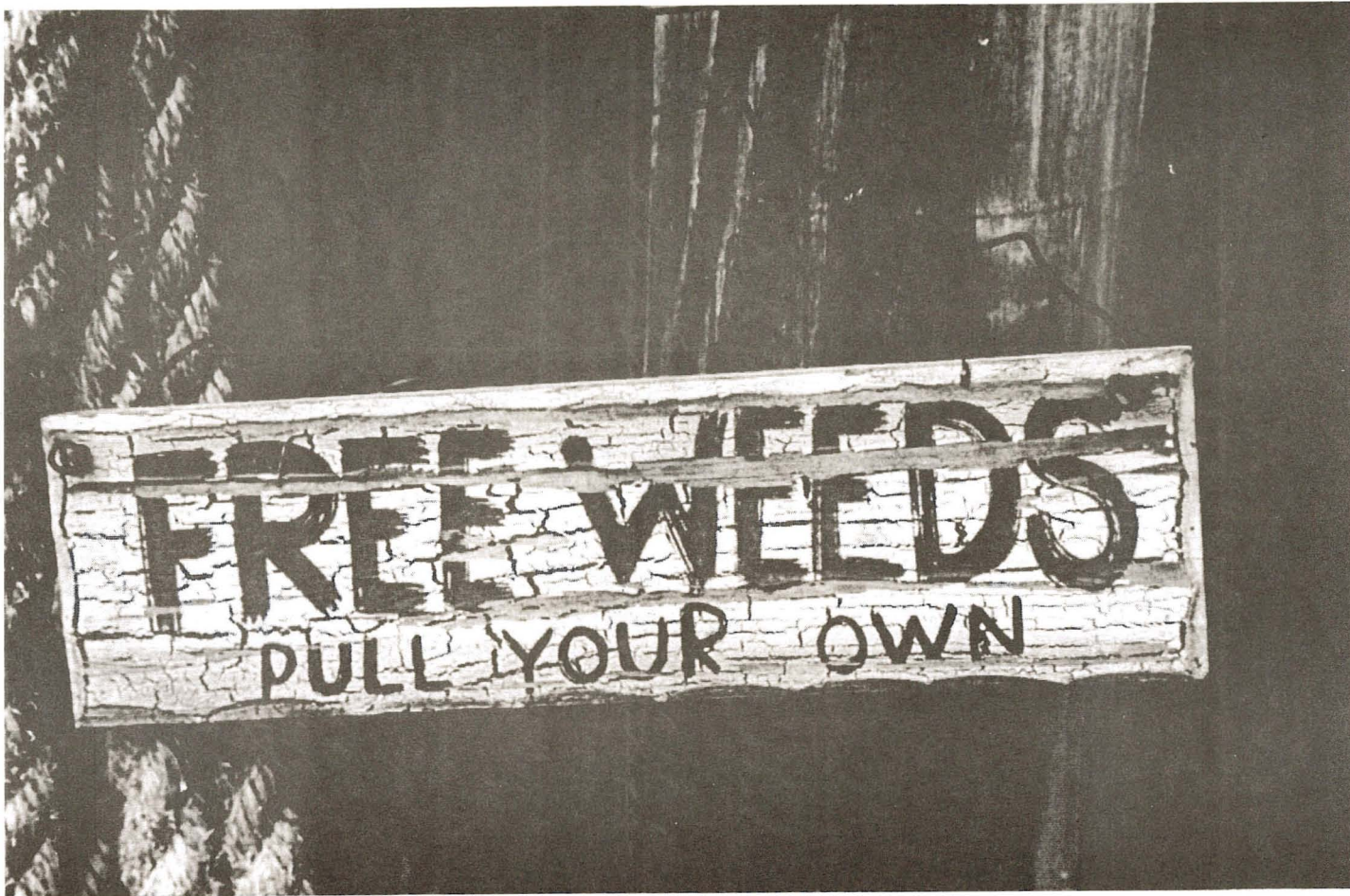
Catherine Steinborn

Selection of Merit

escape from hate
Nathan Balysh



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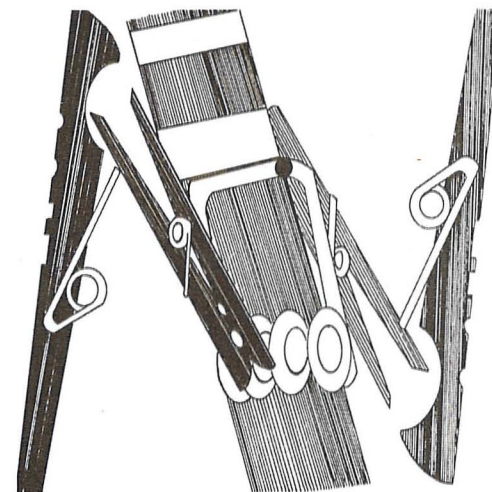
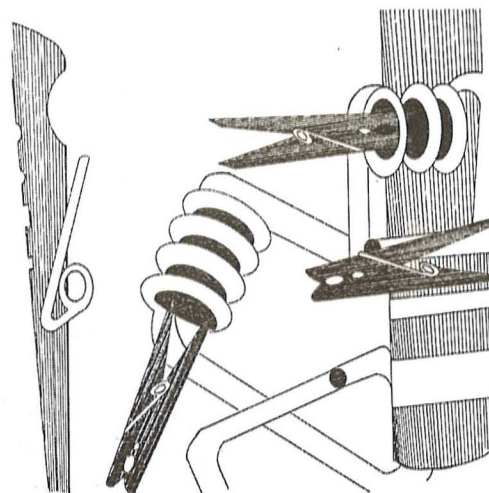
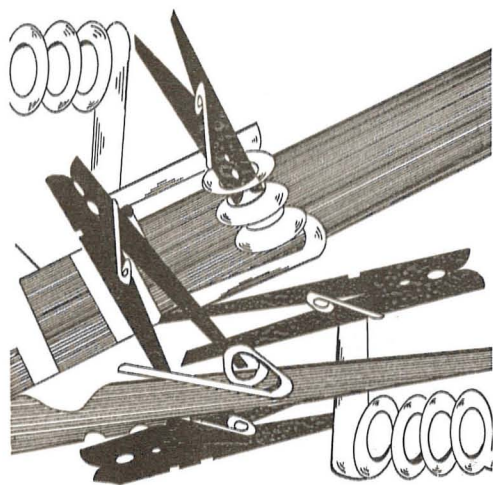


a tempting offer

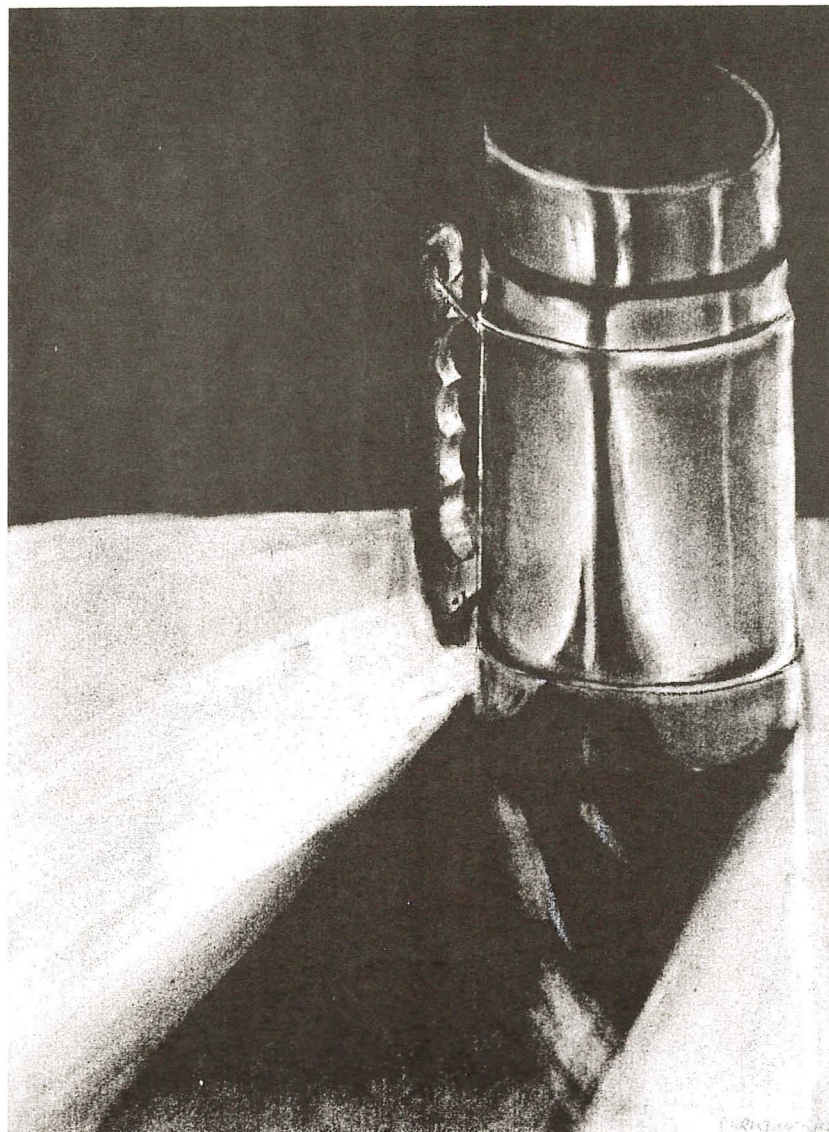
Marklyn Christy
Selection of Merit

wash day series

Lucy Scouten

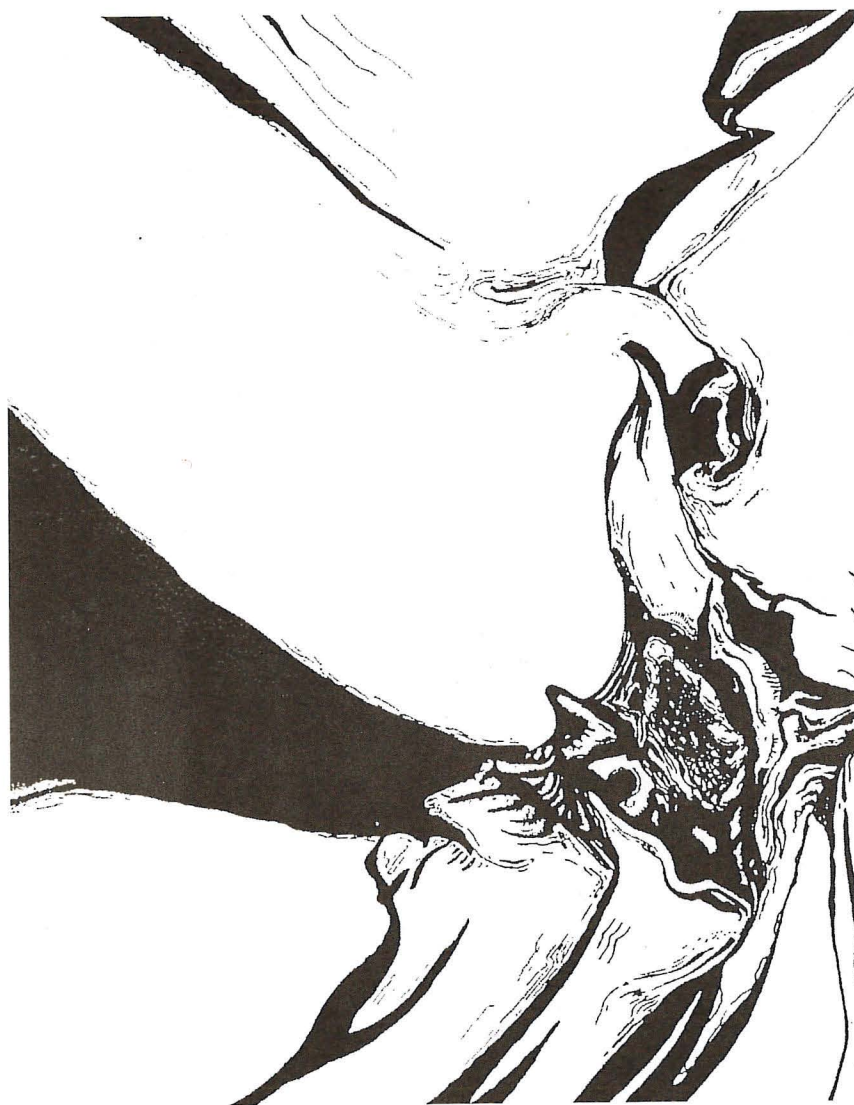


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thermos
Christine Shumate
Selection of Merit

spell of conflict
Philip Scally



patterns

Bourke Award

This year's recipient of the Patrick Bourke Award for an outstanding Visual Arts student is Kevin Kucken. Kevin came to the college to explore art and that meant all about art and everything there was to know about art. He took his first studio class and produced art and produced art and produced art. Kevin lives art and for him art is a way of life and art is what makes life worth living.

Surrounding himself with his own art wasn't enough because he could always be found in the Fine Arts Building galleries looking at more "new" art. But this wasn't enough. He dragged other people into the galleries ostensibly to show them something, to share something but ultimately to talk about art.

Challenging! Challenging! – Constantly challenging himself, challenging his TEACHERS, challenging his fellow students – chiding, supporting and always sharing his greatest JOY – Art. Kevin became the official greeter to the Fine Arts Building. Have you seen this? Do you know what's going on next? You should go to the Noon Concerts. They're just "awesome."

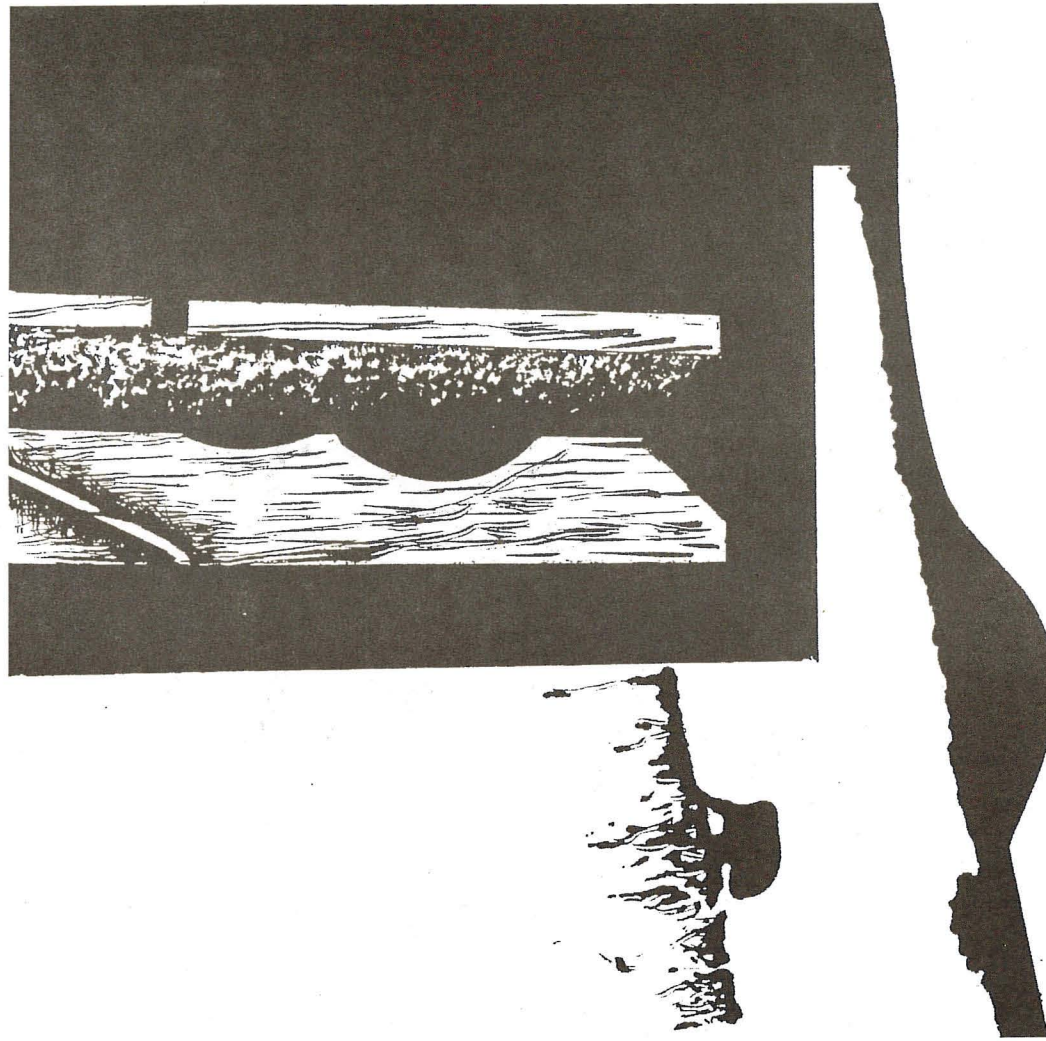
This enthusiasm for art and the arts have always been a part of Kevin, but more recently it became the focus of his life's work. Upon graduation from high school he joined the military and ultimately returned to Michigan and found a job working in a factory. In a routine follow-up session with a military advisor, Kevin found that because of his military service he was eligible for some educational benefits. Kevin came to St. Clair County Community College running because he was going to be an ART TEACHER. He found art here and found teachers here and took advantage of both. Kevin is a "student." The Art Department rejoices as we think about Kevin's future as an artist and teacher continuing to share his love of art with an ever-expanding audience.

I don't know but now I do

Kevin Kucken



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nature to industrial product

Leonid Grinberg

Selection of Merit



Kathleen Nickerson Poetry Award

"Silenced" employs an emphatic energy and confident intelligence driving it through to its necessary final image. It exacts insistences on visual and verbal pleasures. Though they enact a brilliant accommodation between the observable and the imagined, there is nothing in them that suggests the accommodation is fixed. "Silenced" is especially remarkable for its quick lyric glances, touching, revelatory, intense metaphors that accumulate in the ineffable and the unparaphrasable.

First Place Winner

"Wilderness Song" uses direct address for commanding the impossible. Its ability to recall "a shadow symphony, / mists in a chanting forest" is both inclusive and wonderfully strange. This poem's concern with the sounds we inhabit and create demonstrate a fruitful intellectual and spiritual obsessiveness, and its attention to detail and language present us with an impressive imaginative richness.

Second Place Winner

"Quenched Steel, 1959" is a wonderful blend of personal and historical subjects. The economy of language and the stunning straddling of lyric and narrative impulses provide the reader with a sensory-filled story, not simply told, but rather experienced and felt.

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She borrowed words.

She wore them
like ill-fitting clothes
that slumped off her shoulders,
hung in awkward folds.

She dragged them along,
guilty burdens
with trailing strings
that tripped her.

Clumsy charades
stumbled across
the stage of her tongue
like small-town pretentious actors.

Later,
she memorized holy scriptures,
hung onto these inerrant words,
tasted power on her tongue.

She copied whole pages
from authorized versions,
typed them out in crisp, black font,
as impressive and remote
as cold stone tablets.

She quoted sleek answers,
debated rare meanings,
recited speeches
before worshipping crowds.

In other words,
she was good.

It was years
before her fingers felt
the gaping holes,
traced the ragged ridge
across her skin,
for which she had
no words.

borrowed words
Grace Vermeer
Selection of Merit

silenced
Grace Vermeer

Words could not breathe in that house.

Each night my mother pushed them
under the kitchen sink,
all her unspoken words
molding and rotting
in dark, damp places.

She sealed them in canning jars,
bloated drowned fruit
lined up in cobwebbed cellars.

They choked in clogged drains,
decayed on compost heaps,
lingering in the parentheses
of corn husks
and watermelon rinds.

She flattened them between
black, leather covers,
pressed them next to
holy words in red.

She piled them under stacks of dusty books:
Tortured for Christ,
Martyr's Mirror.

Once,

when my father looked at me,
reached for the heavy belt,
her words leapt out,
scraped across the kitchen linoleum,
reeling and gasping
like shackled slaves
released from squalid holds.

That night,
her tongue hung limp,
lynched,
strung
from the roof
of her mouth.

Kathleen Nickerson
poetry award

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With the sun slung low in its fiery haze,
last rays mingling in green sea waves,
now is the time for gray, armored gulls
to scream in glorious feathered flight.
Sundown sets the hour of lofty weeds,
as they give way to web-footed captives,
letting them loose upon sheltered shores,
still warm from summer's golden glances.
Here, pitted rocks settle deeper
to dream of the boulders they were long ago,
and feel the tread of long legged heron,
blue as the sky before its blood-red confessions.
Here mussel-covered driftwood flows,
green leaves now moss shrouded,
wood sea-polished by seasoned water
on its endless cycle of mist and rain.
Here is the time of quiet,
when day unreels;
its moments shimmer
with the heat of the day, like the scales of a fish.
Here is the time of reflection, for soon day
will drift into the simple abyss of dusk,
and the solid shadow of memory,
leaving naught but night and the stars.

harbor at sunset

Samantha Hicks

Selection of Merit

wilderness song

Grace Vermeer

Wander within the womb, be lost.
Trace the words carved on your skin,
learn their secret code.

Let their crimson speech
seep into your rocky skin,
weep upon your cold stone heart.

Eat the broken bread of grief,
drink the cup of mystery.
Drink, be filled, the water is free.

Taste the unlicked earth,
feel the yearning on your tongue,
lie beneath its crushing weight.

Incubate a soaring sky,
the iron ache of winter,
the purple language of summer.

Memorize the moon's pale face.
Watch, she lifts her milky veil
and peers into the soft, clear night.

Recall a shadow symphony,
mists in a chanting forest,
rain on a smooth, black stone.

Sew it deep beneath your skin,
beauty, pain and mystery,
feel it pulsing through your veins,

waiting for your voice.

Patterns Awards
first place poetry

Aroundandaround, tip to tail
pink chases white.
Neither ahead nor behind, colors trail.
Still, circling about my waist
movement suspends motion.

Aroundandaround the rhythm follows
color tags color.
Spiraling circles continue the pattern,
cycling standard of myth.

Aroundandaround, increasing the motion
repeating faster and faster.
What's now, before and forever to be,
the colors mesh together.

Aroundandaround t r a v e l i n g up my spine
tickling as it goes.
Swishing, swooshing up and away-
to the tip, tip top
of my neck.

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hula hoop
Heather Blake
Selection of Merit

quenched steel

Grace Vermeer

*The hardest steels are made by plunging red-hot ingots in water or oil, a process called quenching.
Quenched steel is hard but brittle, glass-like, easily shattered.*

Thirty thousand steelworkers
strode out
into the stinking air on Carson Street,
marched in picket lines.

Coal cars clanked
and rattled to a halt.
The spewing stacks stood breathless.
The blast furnace, cold and dark.

My father carried home
the smoldering rage
of one hundred and sixteen days,
in his black lunch bucket.

The blast furnace flickered
in his steel blue eyes.
We crouched
and waited.

He tipped it out,
vats of molten fury.
We ran,
too late.
Rivers of fire engulfed us.

He poured our hearts,
liquid steel,
into molds,
then plunged them in frigid water.

We were quenched steel.

Hard and cold,
our hearts like glass,
ready to be shattered.

Awards
Patterns
2nd place poetry

2

My two big brothers careened
through life
(right past my father)
with raucous laughter and cool contempt
for the fiery welts
that lay in stripes
across their backs.

In the iron blue dusk
of winter, I watched them pack
their gear, whistle
for the dogs and leave.
They tramped along the rusty
banks of Sulphur Creek,
setting trap lines.

In the stifling heat and haze
of summer, they mounted
bikes and disappeared
in trails of dust,
to swim and fish in the strip pits
among the coal ravaged
hills of Ohio.

Later they turned to guns.

Once,
I left that house
and crossed the field.
I stepped into a shadowy
wood, among the towering trees.
I saw each tender leaf
and lacey fern,
each bed of moss,
behind a numbing wash of gray
with strokes of bloody red.

I turned
back to those cloistered walls,
back to my mother's sad gray eyes.
Ambushed
by her hungry grief,
I stepped into her martyr's mirror
and hung
inside her silent screams.

watercolor in red and gray
Grace Vermeer
Selection of Merit

The day was gray,
I'm not sure if it was what I saw,
or how I felt;
I'd never been there before.
The polished redwood lid, so small,
yet with a presence so big;
I could barely keep my eyes
on the watery faces around me.
The gathering was exceptional:
even Great Aunt Gladys attended,
further disturbing the peace
with her comments on how young he was,
and how unfair life, and how if only
they'd caught it earlier.
But I heard none of this,
too busy was I watching,
poor Billy in the corner,
seeming quiet and dazed;
remembering shared ice cream cones
and secret spy missions,
fearing the stranger he would grow to be.
How long I spent musing over what
words were most appropriate,
what monotonous syllables
would soothe away the dark...
but none did come.
For what can you say to someone
who has lost their shadow?

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eulogy for the radio flyer
Samantha Hicks
Selection of Merit

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jam time
Michael E. Hall
Selection of Merit

Put my poetic license
back in the cereal box
from whence it came.

I feel so lacking
in claim to fame.

Revoke my right to rhyme,
to collapse time,
with words provoke senses,
feelings that remember
meanings for being alive.

Make me mute,
bottled,
a self-immolating hermit,
imprisoned
on my island-mind.

Cancel my reservation
for the rapture,
in my gut
is undigested hurt.
I disappointed the Universe,
again.

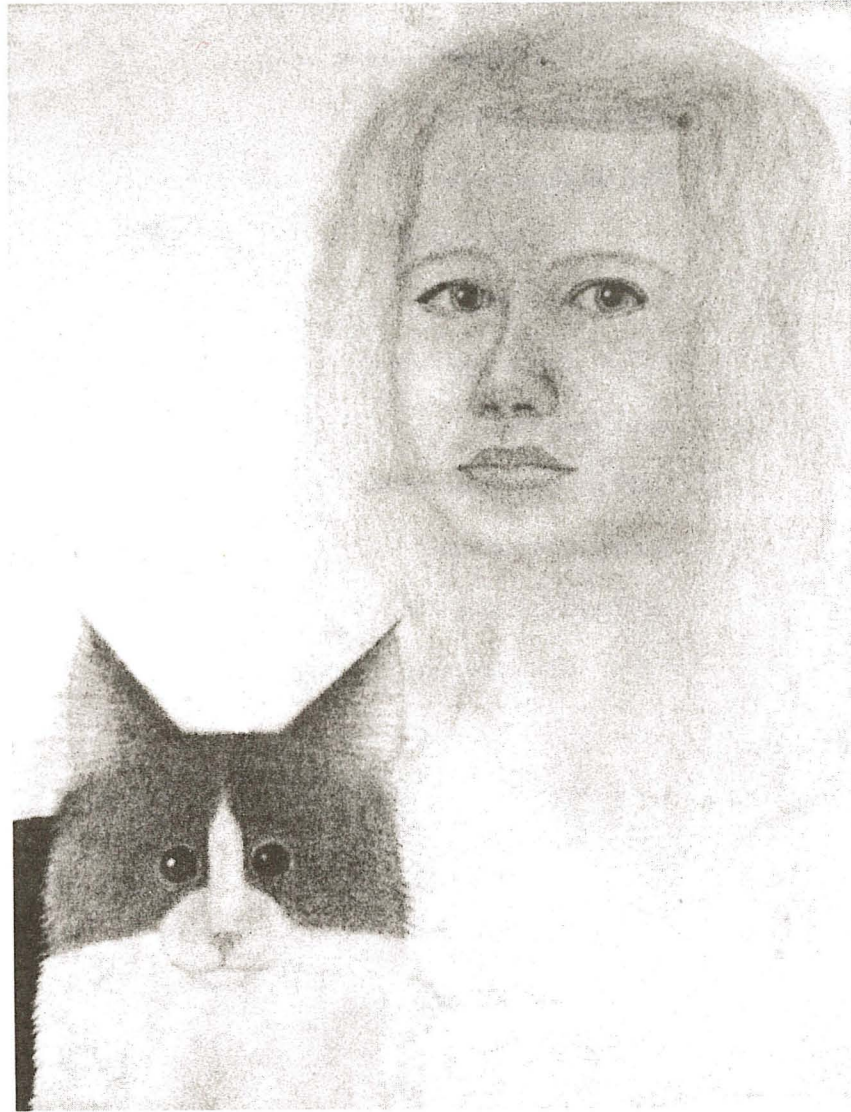
When,
will I ever learn?
Repetition is my teacher;
school's hard knocks return.

File me
with the unforgiven;
the jailer with the key
is me.

2

renegade
Gordon Neumann
Selection of Merit

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self portrait
Emily Anderson
Selection of Merit

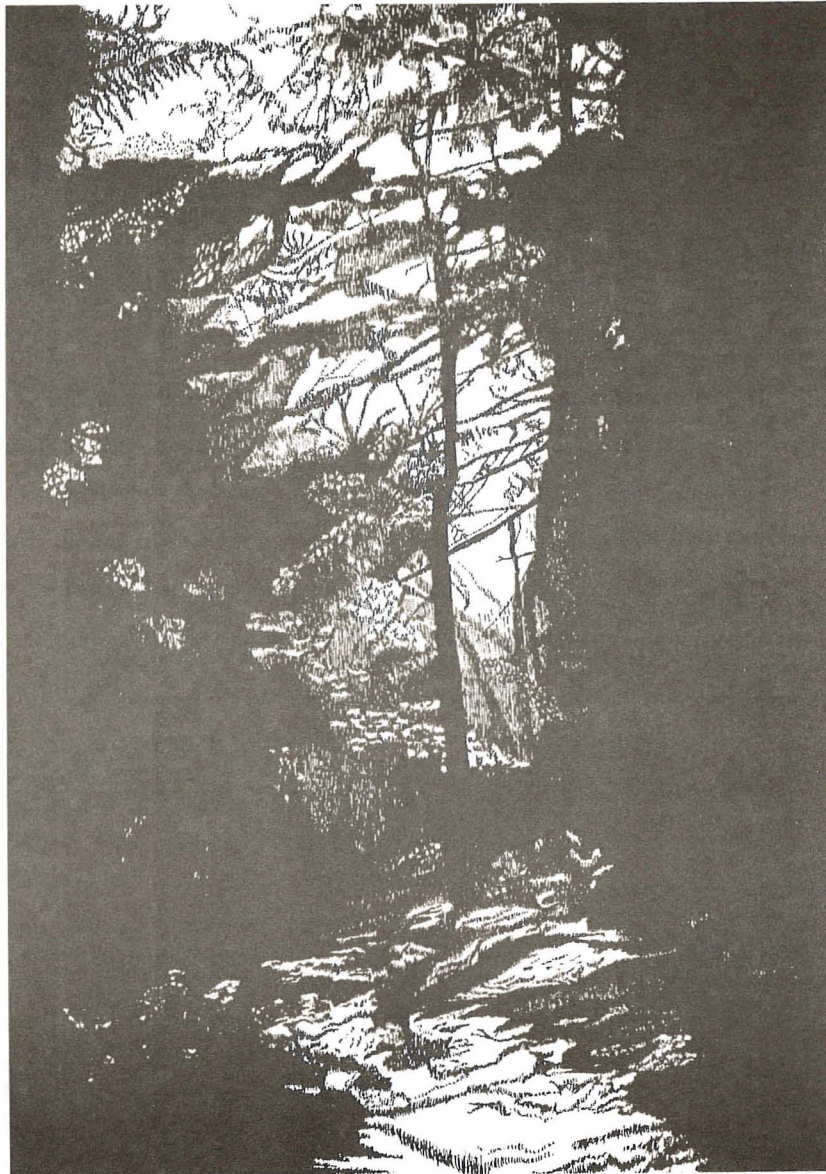
(For L.)

Birgie looked over at me and laughed, his face all lit up and the radio blaring. Under the brazen fire of that Montana sky, his laughter spread out across the desolate highway, caught up by the relentless wind and bounced along with the tumbleweeds over the brown, parched land that stretched in every direction. He laughed as though our hearts were not cracked wide open, as if we had forgotten all the cruel, hard memories, as if we had licked the earth and found manna. Long after our dreams lay quiet in the dust, I remembered his laughter.

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redemption
Grace Vermeer
Selection of Merit

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the end
Jody Parmann
Selection of Merit

Eleanor B. Mathews Writing Award

"Hands" demonstrates a sharp, synecdochic imagination, while maintaining a strong argument through vivid, acutely attentive details. Not only does the author reveal a perceptive mind, as rapt by a range of minutiae (the polish on an aging man's nails for instance), but also a sublime awareness of the grave, and potentially rich, significance of "absence" within the narrative. Here, we are presented not just with "hands," but "missing fingers" too through the author's sober reflections on the countless factory workers who have suffered such losses. It is unusual for a young writer to be attentive to deficiency as a plausible focus of study. In "Hands," however, the reader encounters a compelling subtlety—an evocative prescience of mind—that turns the reader's gaze to areas that might not otherwise look: the writer's most fundamental job.

First Place Winner

"The Human Influence on the Western Wilderness" renders complex, often paradoxical, ideas in a lucid, well-turned and well-tuned prose that percolates with convincing examples from the text. An attentive and insightful essay, the author portrays Cooper's "wilderness" with subtlety and imagination—unpacking its multiple layers carefully in precise, professional tones that reveal a discerning eye for details. Cooper's troubled sentiments about the settlement of the Western frontier are thoughtfully explored here in a thorough and persuasive essay.

Second Place Winner

A warm and expressive personal narrative, "Family Memories" gives us a memorable family portrait in engrossing slice-of-life moments. The author attends to detail—to speckled eggs and plaster stains, to buried beer bottles and homemade horseradish—with equal portions of delicacy and affection so that we find ourselves immersed in the compelling arcana of one family's traditions with unassuming pleasure. While nostalgic essays often tend to overlook the more sobering details of family life, here we instead find ourselves absorbed in the landscape of one very real family's evocative idiosyncrasies.

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take another look

Marklyn Christy
Selection of Merit

hands

Chris Basney

While hands are an appendage most of us are blessed with, they are special to each being. Regardless of age, nationality, gender, or size, each pair of hands tell a different story. Soft, callused, long and thin, short and wide, warm, cold, are a few words to describe characteristics of hands. Every individual is unique, with an unrepeated history. The map of these histories is found in one's hands. In a lifetime I have been amazed at how many differences there can be, and that's only the few, I've noticed during my own unique history.

I first noticed hands when my boss handed me his notes to be transcribed. His hands matched his kind, gentle, personality. They were spotless and manicured. I had never seen manicured hands on a man. They were perfect. His 64-year old hands were pink with wrinkles, but they were full, not shrunken. His nails were pale pink with a clear layer of nail polish. I definitely had never seen nail polish on a man, although I wondered if I would have noticed. His cuticles were completely intact, not a tear on them. The only reason I noticed this time was because I got such an up close view.

I never realized how many men have missing fingers, until I worked in a small, country party store. I've only seen one woman with missing fingers, but I've noticed countless men with missing fingers. Usually these men look like they've spent their long lives in factories or on farms, working long hours every day. Asking how the digits were lost doesn't seem appropriate. They've learned to live perfectly normal lives without all of their fingers. Missing fingers or not, there is a story to match each of these hands. At first, I was careful not to touch the customer's hands, for fear of offending them, or perchance exchange germs. As I warmed up to the delightful job of talking to people every day, I relaxed enough to realize, people don't mind if one puts change directly into their hand and touches it in the process; instead of coldly dropping change

into the customer's outstretched hand without contact. One elderly gentleman comes into the store every evening. As I place 42 cents in change in his leathery hands, I realize how shiny and hard they are. They are rough, yet smooth, callused yet unbroken. His hands are shriveled into a permanent cup shape. He looks direly old and as if he's never had a day off in his life.

Looking down into my friend's hand as he carefully held my hand, I admired the strong worn hands of a hardworking farmer. It was a chilly day and I was shivering as usual. He held onto my thin hands, saying they felt so cold that he just wanted to warm them. When I told him he had nice warm hands, he described his hands as wide and heavy, and his fingers as short and stubby. I think his hands are warm and tender, just as his heart is kind and his arms are comforting.

Growing up, I remember my Dad's rough hands. His hands are hard and worn from years as an Iron Worker. Now retired, he keeps our vehicles in shape and maintains our homes. Grandchildren are his greatest care these days. His favorite thing to do with us is to walk out back in the woods. Never mind what season it is, he can name every tree in the old woods. He retells of his childhood spent in those woods, playing in the humongous and ancient oak tree or sitting on "Indian Rock" and making up stories with his brother about how the Indians used to hunt in our woods. Dad's a strong man with strong hands.

While his hands are tough, they are warm, warm like he is. Dad is a loving man, who's not afraid to tell us how much he loves us or cry when he's concerned for our safety.

Grandpa had great big warm hands. Looking at pictures of him, I describe him to my children as a quiet gentle man, who loved his family. He told us stories of our ancestors, and where we came from. He told us how he wasn't allowed to learn the language of the "Father Land" during World War I, because it was dangerous to speak German in those days. I remember, as a small child looking up at him, always feeling safe when he took my small hand in his large hands, and walked me up the sidewalk or into Church. Nothing bad would ever happen as long as Grandpa was holding my hand.

My brother's hands are the biggest hands I've ever seen. The birth of my son showed me how large and loving my brother's hands are. He came into our hospital room to share the joy of a new family member. At nearly eleven pounds, my little baby wasn't so little. I commented that my babies are big, and I guess I would not have a tiny little baby to put cute little hats on. Larry gingerly picked up my new pride and joy and held his head gently in his immense hands. My little boy looked much smaller when held, so lovingly, by those gigantic hands. Larry's heart is as titanic as his hands.

Years after Grandpa had passed away, I was walking up the same sidewalk with my 3-year old son, that I had walked with my Grandpa so long ago. He looked up at me, and I could tell by the look in his eyes and the joyful smile on his handsome little face, that he felt safe, as my thin narrow hands with long slender fingers, held on to his "little man" hands. His hands were small, wide and warm. They looked and felt just like Grandpa's hands did years earlier.

Life moves on. My baby is now 6 feet tall and has hands like Grandpa's. There is other new life in our family. As I was singing to my brand new nephew and he was holding my finger, tears welled up as I looked at these, so very tiny pink hands, the hands of another generation. He has so much to see and do. Just as carnival fortune-tellers peer into our futures by deciphering the lines on one's palms, I began to wonder what the future would hold for the newest man in our midst. His life has yet to be-outlined, a fresh new map, with no history. What course will he chart? Will he have the big soft warm safe hands of the generations of men before him? Will his hands be manicured and polished to match an intellectual lifestyle? Will his hands be rough and hard from a lifetime of manual labor? Whatever life his hands reveal, may they be the hands that hold on to a long happy loving life.

the human influence on the western wilderness

Rebekah Ilene Kirk

The Pioneers, by James Fenimore Cooper, has a theme common to American literature. It describes the settlement of the country westward and the pioneers who make the journey to civilize the wilderness. This tale is focused on a new settlement called Templeton, named after the founder, Judge Marmaduke Temple. Cooper, at first, uses the character of Marmaduke as an instrument to show the ideas and attitudes of the settlers of the American frontier and, later, as a voice of reason among those settlers, perhaps adopting some traits that Cooper himself would find more admirable. While Cooper does this, I feel that the overall tone that he creates in the story along with the words and actions of Judge Temple make it clear that he was opposed to the pioneers' methods of domesticating the Western wilderness.

Cooper gives the reader several examples throughout the text of the way that the settlers felt about the wilderness around them. The tone he creates through his description is not colorful, but, instead, rather depressing and, in a way, shows that he does not agree with the views of a settler. The author describes "...a dark and dreary wood, where the rays of the sun could but rarely penetrate, and where even the daylight was obscured and rendered gloomy by the deep forests that surrounded them" (2121). This creates a very bleak scene in the readers mind. But this description works to show the opinions of the settlers for why they want to "improve" upon the natural setting. Judge Temple represents the ambition of the pioneer. Marmaduke says to his daughter of his first visit to those woods that, "Wild and unsettled as it may yet seem, it must have been a thousand times more dreary then" (2117). The fact that Marmaduke calls the wilderness dreary shows that he feels some disdain towards this kind of setting, and perhaps he feels he has improved on the before untouched land. Later, he recalls that the place was a "silent wilderness" that left him with "a mingled feeling of pleasure and desolation" (2119). It is strange that Marmaduke

could find this place at once pleasurable and unpleasant, but he feels this way because of the ideas formed in his mind by society, which tell him that this untamed land is not a place to be enjoyed as it is, but is meant to be civilized.

By creating the image of the wilderness, as the pioneers would see it, as a dark and gloomy and desolate place, I think that Cooper is making the reader realize something. That is, as one reads *The Pioneers*, they may find that the image of the wilderness expressed in the story is far different from their image of the beauty of nature. This is meant to make the reader question the attitude of a pioneer, and shows that Cooper also questioned this and did not agree with that attitude.

Since the settlers feel this way about the natural world around them, the next step is, of course, to do what they see fit to improve it. Cooper's writing shows that he has negative feelings about the actions of the settlers because he illustrates the ways in which their presence leads to the destruction of the natural setting. Marmaduke says that when he first arrived in Templeton there was "No clearing, no hut, none of the winding roads that are now to be seen...Even the Susquehanna was then

hid, by the height and density of the forest" (2119). This statement lets the reader imagine the beginning of the process to take away all that they found so dark and gloomy to make way for their idea of civilization. Cooper further uses the character of Judge Temple to show the destructive force of the settling population when the Judge explains that "A pine of more than ordinary growth stood where my dwelling is now placed; a wind row had been opened from thence to the lake, and my view was but little impeded" (2119). The language of the Judge shows his indifference toward this destruction, and he displays no remorse for having chopped down an extraordinary specimen of nature just because he had to have that exact spot to build his house with a good view, "but little impeded" by all of the towering trees that might have been in the way.

Cooper also examines the larger scope of the destruction when he describes the arrival of spring in Templeton. He again creates a dismal mood for the reader when he writes, "One day, the soft airs of spring seemed to be stealing along the valley... while on the next, the surly blasts from the north would sweep across the lake..." (2123). After this struggle, when the snow does finally melt, it reveals "...green wheat fields... in every direction, spotted with the dark and charred stumps that had, the preceding season, supported some of the proudest trees of the forest" (2123). I think that Cooper's intention is to show that the onset of warm weather that has been so desired is somehow not as sweet since all the melting snow uncovers is a graveyard of burned trees. By saying that those trees were the "proudest" he makes it obvious that it was a shame to bring them down. This cheerless atmosphere that Cooper has established with the changing season works to demonstrate his disapproval of the actions of the pioneers. He is criticizing their ideas of "improving" the wilderness, and the measures they take to do so.

The landscape was not the only thing altered by the settlers of Templeton. They also took advantage of other natural resources in the abundant woodland of the American frontier. Cooper focuses on the exploitation of the native animals, and gives clear examples of the wasteful practices of the pioneers. Chapter twenty-two centers on a bird hunt held by the settlers ending in the slaughter of thousands of migrating pigeons. Cooper describes that, "death was hurled on the retreat of the affrighted birds, who were rising in a volley, in a vain effort to escape" (2125). He also refers to the pigeons as, "...nimble enemies...", and "...fluttering victims..." (2125). Cooper never suggests that these pigeons are game, but instead calls them "victims" and says they are "nimble". He doesn't say that shooting them is a sport, but he makes the scene seem like a battlefield instead by saying that "...the attack commenced"

(2124). He, in fact, calls it, "...this wasteful and unsportsmanlike execution..." (2125). The tone created here is a sad one. An atmosphere of destruction and death has been established.

Before the hunt began, Cooper writes of Marmaduke that he "...seemed equally to participate..." (2124) in the wish to destroy the pigeons. He is trying to show that the Judge was of the same frame of mind as the other settlers in that he wanted to go out for the hunt so much that he cared little about whether he actually should. However, another character in the story, and old hunter who lives in the woods called Leather-stocking, seems to influence Marmaduke's feelings about the morality of the slaughter. Leather-stocking enters the scene in the heat of the battle, and while he witnesses the attack he exclaims, "This comes of settling a country! Here have I known the pigeons to fly for forty long years, and, till you made your clearings there was nobody to skear or hurt them" (2126). I believe that this makes a point of the fact that no matter what kind of claim the settlers have, those birds have been around much longer. It upsets Leather-stocking that the settlers don't understand that the pigeons have just as much right to be there. He further comments that, "It's wicked to be shooting into flocks in this wastey manner; and none do it who know how to knock over a single bird" (2126). By saying this, he criticizes the settlers for having neither sense of balance with nature nor any respect for keeping that balance. They don't think that they're wasting life and, as another character replies, Leather-stocking is just "...grumbling at the loss of a few pigeons" (2126). But Judge Temple is affected by the words of Leather-stocking. When the hunter, having shot down a single bird to eat, says, "...I will go home, for I don't relish to see these wastey ways that you are all practysing, as if the least thing was not made for use, and not to destroy" (2127), the Judge replies, "Thou sayest well, Leather-stocking and I begin to think it time to put an end to this work of destruction" (2127). This marks a major change in the attitude of Marmaduke that it somewhat surprising. By saying that what they have done is a "...work of destruction..." he is showing feelings far different from the rest of the pioneers, and more like the feelings of the author. Cooper ends the chapter on a sullen note that reinforces the position that he holds towards the pioneers' actions as he writes that Marmaduke feels that he has "...purchased pleasure at the price of misery to others" (2128).

Cooper writes of another example of the wastefulness of the pioneers when he describes a fishing expedition on Otsego Lake. The fishermen, in this case, do not use poles or bait, but, instead use a large fishing boat and a net to bring in their prey. He explains that this practice was employed because, "the hook and line were ill-suited to the profusion and impatience of the settlers" (2129). The Judge seems to be

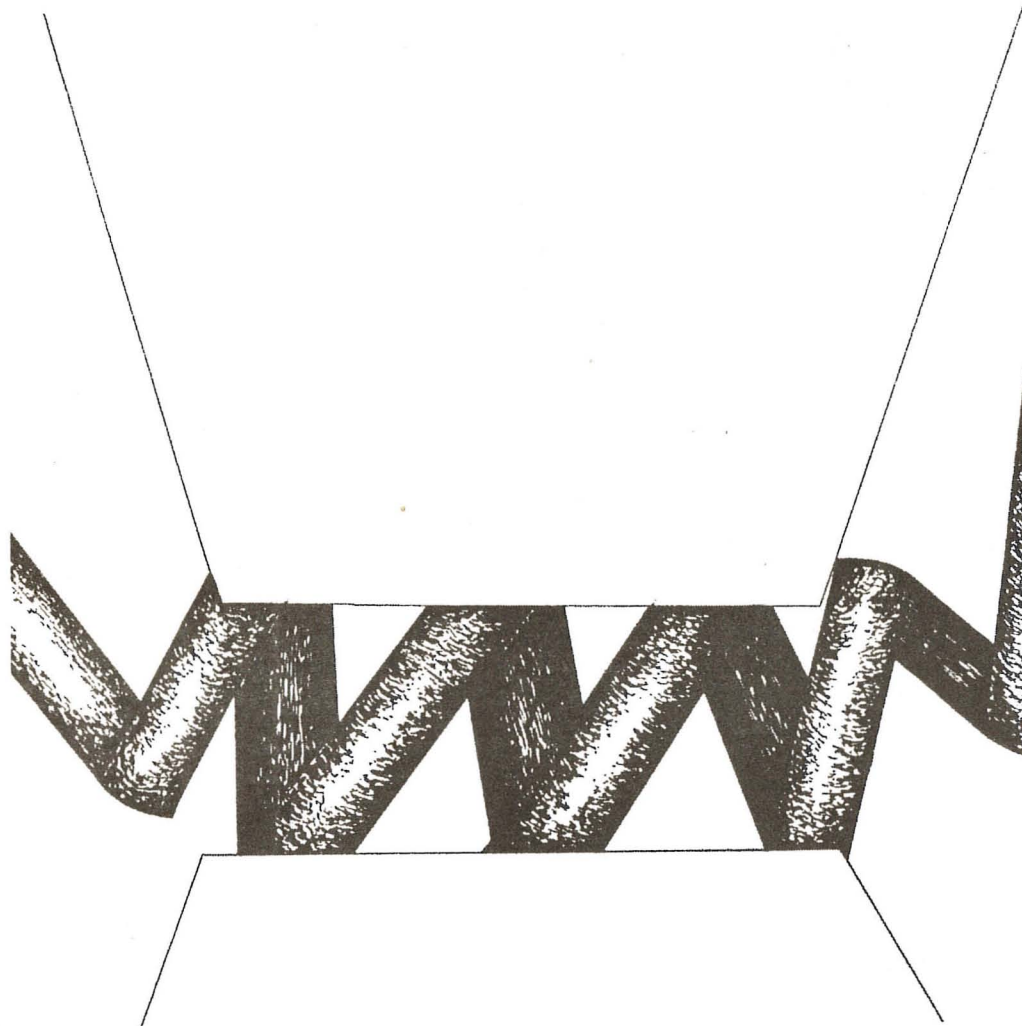
completely opposed to this idea. He says to the captain of the boat that "I have known thee to leave fragments enough behind thee, when thou hast headed a night-party on the lake, to feed a dozen famished families" (2129). He recognizes that it is wrong for the settlers to be so short sighted in their views on using the natural resources.

The tone created by Cooper is again gloomy. He writes, "By the time they reached the bank...where the fishermen had landed, the moon had sunk behind the tops of the western pines, and...most of the stars were obscured by clouds" (2130). He also adds that "...it's [mountain's] shadow was cast, wide and dense, on the bosom of the water, rendering the darkness, in that direction, trebly deep" (2132). And he says, "The echoes from the opposite hills...sent back the discordant laugh that Benjamin gave forth...and the woods that covered their sides, seemed, by the noise that issued from their shades, to be full of mocking demons" (2131). These images together create a dreary and grim mood and it sets the stage for the oncoming collection of victims from the lake.

As the fishermen send out their boat, Cooper explains of the lake that the men, "were about to rifle it of its best treasures" (2132). He says that, as they were being dragged in, the fish were "...prisoners..." and "...alarmed victims..." and he expresses their "...fruitless efforts for freedom..." (2133). When Judge Temple reflects on the enormous haul of fish, he says "...like all the other treasures of the wilderness, they [bass] already begin to disappear before the wasteful extravagance of man" (2134). Marmaduke is, once again, sympathetic to nature when everyone else seems eager to exploit the treasures that it offers. He states that, "This is a fearful expenditure of the choicest gifts of Providence" (2134). This shows the main idea of Cooper's writing. He realizes that the land is being taken advantage of in this time and feels the need to remark on the wastefulness and greediness that destroys all of the wonderful gifts that nature has given.

It is with this attitude that the author wrote *The Pioneers*. Cooper shows that he was not in favor of the attitudes and opinions of these settlers. Through his use of tone and language, he gives the reader an idea of his feelings, and he also uses the character of Judge Marmaduke Temple to show how attitudes can, and should, change. Judge Temple embodies the pioneer spirit at first, but as the story goes on he begins to realize that there are certain errors in the action of westward expansion. The end result of Cooper's writing is an illustration why the settlers' ideas for refining and improving the wilderness of the western frontier, were harmful, thoughtless, wasteful, and exploitative.

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slapback
Philip Scally
Selection of Merit

family memories

Chris Basney

Visiting my maternal Grandparents during the '60's and '70's was always an adventure. Our aggregate family was a full-size, multigenerational, loving family, with many different abilities and personalities. Everyone had his or her own special talents and responsibilities. We all watched out for and took care of each other. I have so many memories of those years, almost as many as my Mom has about the '50's and growing up there.

When I came over early, Grandma would send me, with a reed basket, to gather brown speckled eggs for breakfast. Ahhh, warm summer days were the best. The sun would beat down on me as I made my way across the back yard, and on the way, I would pause to check in on the pigs. They would lie in the cool dark mud and grunt at me as I dilly-dallied my way to the chicken coop. When I finally made my way into the long, narrow building, I forgot the eggs for a few moments and watched how the dust floated in the rays of sunlight that crept in through the gaps between the barn boards. I always thought those bright rays of dancing dust were coming straight from Heaven and that someone up there was watching me. By the time I returned to the farmhouse, Grandma had the bacon going and she was ready for the eggs.

The chicken coop wasn't the only outdoor building. I thought the two-holed and three-holed outhouses were for kids to use, so we'd stay out of Grandma's hair. Plumbing was a new luxury in our neighborhood, and Grandma and Grandpa were very delighted to have it. I didn't understand what they were talking about; they had indoor plumbing for as long as I could remember. It was decided that the outhouses were not needed any more and should be done away with. That was reason enough for a party. They threw an "outhouse burning party," burned them down, and filled in the holes. Everyone was there, even Happy Parsons. No one knew how old he was; he didn't even remember how old he was. I wasn't sure how he was

related, but he was the oldest person I had ever met. He walked with a cane, and was all crooked and bent over with gray hair, a prickly chin, and more wrinkles than I had ever thought could fit on one face. He looked as if he would be going to Heaven at any moment. Later, I found records showing he was born in 1900, and he was my Grandpa's cousin.

Every weekend, there was an open poker game for whoever wanted to play. Grandma and Grandpa and their friends would listen to Hank Williams and Johnny Cash while they tipped bottles of Black Label or Altes. My favorite place was sitting under the poker table by Grandpa's feet. He had old work pants with plaster stains and wore tattered brown leather shoes. I sat by those peculiar shoes that had been everywhere with Grandpa, and felt completely safe as if nothing bad would ever happen and that that moment in time would last forever. Grandpa and his cronies would carelessly drop some of their winnings off the table, and I would retrieve it. I wondered how they could be so messy with their money.

When we tired of collecting change, or they wanted us outside, my siblings, cousins, and I would go out and climb one of the MacIntosh trees. Our favorite tree leaned down toward the ground, which made it easier to climb. It had bent and knotted limbs that were easy to maneuver. There was even a funny elongated knot in the middle branch that resembled a snake. We all looked forward to playing in that old tree and eating apples while congregating among its branches. I

mentioned the tree to Grandma recently and she replied, "Oh, you must be talking about the kid tree."

One excuse to go outside and play was horseradish day. Once a year everyone would get together to make horseradish. You didn't even have to make it past the squeaky screen door before your eyes would be burning and flowing like Altes out of the tap. Everyone always gathered at the big log house to do all of the canning and pickling.

Grandpa was the best outdoor cook in the world. We had never heard of barbecuing or even barbecue sauce. Grandpa cooked hamburgers, hot-dogs, and salt-water soaked corn on his homemade grill. His grill was a 55-gallon drum cut in half lengthwise with angle iron legs and a heavy steel grating over the top. His corn was the best, for it was Heaven with butter on it. Grandpa cooked it, husk and all, on his special grill, after soaking the corn over night in salt water.

Grandpa had no patience for the kitchen. Evidence for this was found at the breakfast table. His pancakes were always burned on the surface and raw in the middle. Aunt Pat, Uncle Tom, and I would sit there looking at each other and slowly eat our breakfast, thinking of Grandma and wishing she wasn't working. Mom told us about the time that Grandpa had heard about something called quiche or soufflé and wanted to try it when Grandma wasn't home. Grandpa found a box of powdered eggs and mixed the contents of the box in a pan, put the pan in the chipped porcelain oven, and closed the door. Mom said it would've been funny if it weren't for the look he gave all the kids as they contained their laughter while the eggs began to grow and extend beyond the confines of the oven.

A freshly covered hole in the backyard prompted Mom and her brother, Butch, to question what their Dad had been burying behind the house. Grandpa didn't pay much attention and told them he had buried "dead soldiers" there. "Dead soldiers" were too much temptation for a five year old girl and her ten year old brother. Imagine their disappointment when they discovered an assortment of empty beer bottles. By the time they found the treasure it was dark, so they went to bed, only to wake up to the sound of their Dad as he fell into the hole when he returned from a late night out. She remembered hearing "those kids and their dead soldiers!" Mom and Uncle Butch filled in the hole as soon as the sun was up, hoping their Dad would forget.

Grandma was a big crabby old lady, and I was afraid of her. She once told me not to complain about my burnt toast because burnt toast would make my cheeks rosy. I ate that charcoal bread as fast as I could. I didn't want her to rub that black scratchy stuff on my cheeks.

There was always a place to find relief for a day gone wrong. My favorite comfort zone was Grandpa's huge "1960's" olive green, vinyl lazy boy. As I sat there picking at the silver duct tape that was holding the chair's insides in, I would pout with my lower lip protruding and a "I'm mad at everyone" look would consume me. Grandma, grouchy as ever, wouldn't stand for it and threatened to put her ancient cat, Tiger, on my lip, if I didn't pull it back in. I can still picture her picking up that calico cat and pretending to set her on my lip.

When Grandma wasn't working she was cooking or washing clothes in her wringer washer. Before she had the washer, she washed all the laundry on a scrub board in a big washtub. Mom remembers when Grandma got a new washtub. It had been a rainy spring and the ditches on Springborn Road were brimming with an abundance of water and fish. This area of Springborn Road was once a marsh, and the ditch was not a small one; it had its own current as it headed east towards Belle River. Mom knew the new washtub didn't leak like the old one did, so she grabbed the shiny new silver tub and was off. She used a stick to steer with as she headed downstream. I don't know if she caught any fish that day, but she did "catch it" when Grandma found her cruising the streams in her prized washtub.

Mom and I have numerous stories to share about growing up on Springborn Road. There may have been a few "not-so-good" times, but I don't remember any. Everyone did their part to keep our family intact. We weren't rich or poor; we were together. My Grandparents may have been a bit grumpy at times, but most of the time it was just fun to be a kid and be part of a large, country family.

The democratic form of government in the United States was formed to serve the people. The right to elect our own representatives is a basic example of how the government is here to serve the people. It is important to exercise this right. Unfortunately much of the VAP (voting age population) disagrees. In 1996 only 49.08% of the voting age population voted in the presidential election ("Voting Registration"). People have many different reasons for not voting from one vote doesn't matter to saying they just don't have time to vote. Steps are being taken to make voting easier such as being able to vote on the internet. In order for the United States to progress as a nation, we need to elect the best officials to run our country. This is why it is very important to exercise your right to vote, it will affect your future.

The statistics say that the total percent of the voting age population voting in presidential elections has decreased over 14% from 1960 to 1996 ("Voting Registration"). This is a very sad fact considering that this is affecting the future of our country. Michigan is not all that much better than the rest of the country either they only had 54.42% of the voting age population vote in the 1996 presidential election ("Voting Registration"). The person who gets elected to the presidential office has an abundance of control such as foreign policy which includes wars and tax cuts and increases. Since both of these may directly affect

peoples families and themselves voting for the officials who make theses decisions should be higher on our priority lists.

Many people have reasons why they don't vote in elections. Some of the common reasons are not having enough time to vote, not having transportation to voting booth, and that one vote does even make a difference. The government is trying to accommodate too many of these reasons and this is why internet voting has been proposed because internet voting would make it much easier for people with busy schedules to just vote at home instead of having to go some where. Another accommodation

the government is making is they are trying to provide transportation for those people that do not have it available. Many nursing homes already have systems in which buses stop by there on Election Day and take the people to the polls. Although this service is not provided for all people it does help out many elderly in nursing homes. For the people that say one vote does not make a difference that is not true because considering only 49.08% of the VAP voted in the last presidential election ("Voting Registration"). If the other 50.02% of the VAP voted that would be more than half and definitely would sway the result ("Voting Registration").

Politicians are sometimes another reason why people will refuse to vote. Some people believe that all politicians are corrupt and they are not there to serve the people. This is not a legible excuse because if a person truly believes in corruption they should become involved in the political parties to help stop this corruption. This would also help people get their

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voting participation
Monya Kolasz
Selection of Merit

views heard. In addition to the people who have reasons why they don't vote there is a certain number of people that just don't care. I find this particularly disheartening that people just don't care about their own future. Voting is such an essential part of our future and the control over our country.

Some people need to think about their future and how important it is to them. Then maybe more people will see that voting is important. There are steps being taken to make voting easier for people such as the internet. People should just realize that voting is worth taking time out of their busy schedule. Hopefully, in the future, more of America will realize how important voting is to the future of our society.

The sky filled with beautiful orange and gray, immense clouds. The lifeless screams filled the air. The innocent victims ran from the heartless giant. The chancellor that they had trusted their lives with had betrayed them and was now eliminating the evidence one civilian life at a time.

Familiar retched smells filled the dark noon-time air. Trying not to breath it in you go on with your life. In the back of your mind you wonder how many are in there. You've heard the stories but cannot understand how this could be happening. How so many people can not care at all? How can one man turn the world upside down?

Walking along you witness another giant cloud entering the sky. The earth rattles with the sound that usually accompanies the massive cloud. A dark hole appears in the distance. You keep walking; the odor is getting stronger the farther you go. The others around you are just as lifeless, as pale white, as malnourished, as dieing, the living walking around you are yelling orders. You follow them like a machine, always doing what you are told. Although you know they will finish you off in the end. There

is no way to escape. The ones on the other side of the wall tell you that help is coming. You tell yourself you can hear them marching and firing their guns. You won't believe that it is not help. That the marching is you and the dying walking with you. The firing is that of the living monsters.

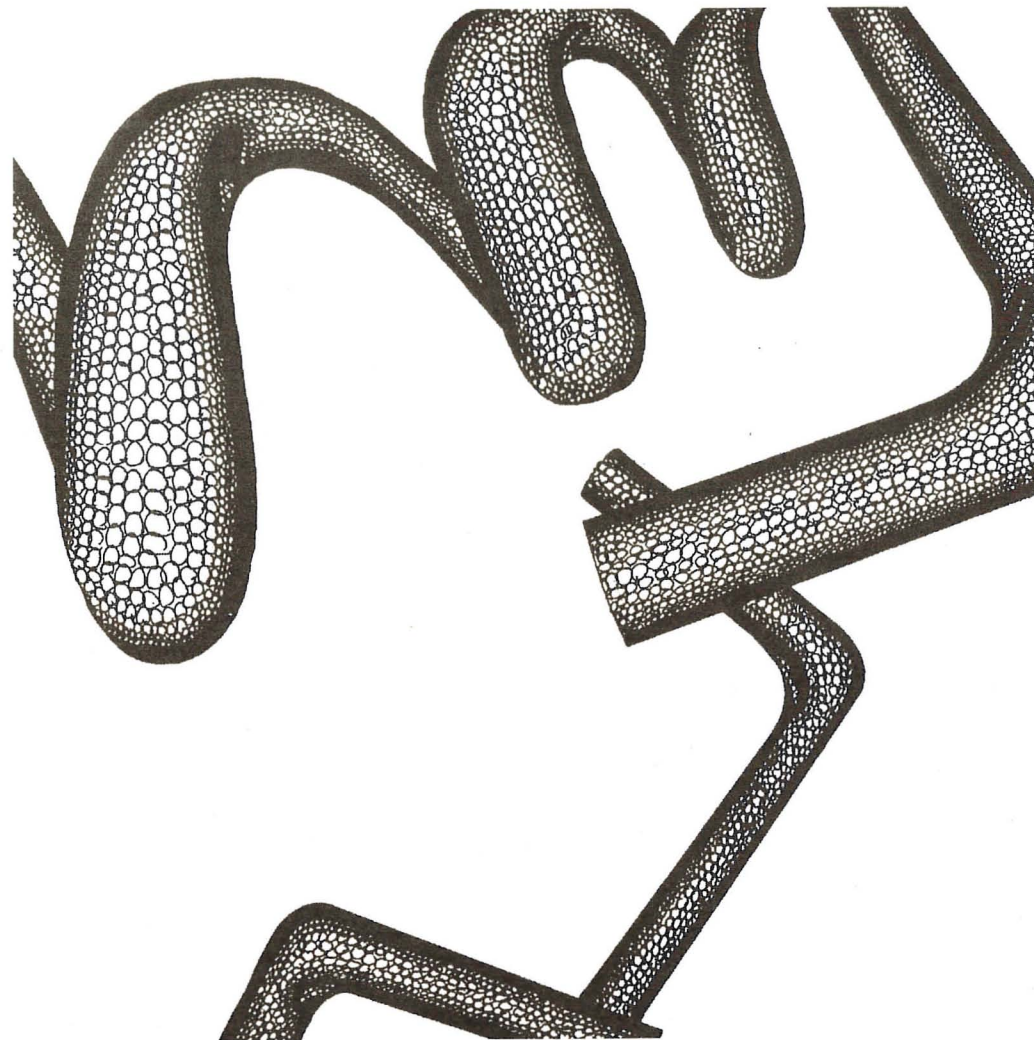
They stop. Those around you cry as they look into the hole filling with the dead and the dying. You finally look up not wanting what is happening to set in. They line you up in groups. The monster with the gun smiles as he loads another round. The sound of machine gun enters your brain. The limp bodies are falling into the pile. They line you up. The man standing next to you pleads and is finished. You cry as you see the monsters laughing. The gun rises. You are hit. Another body is added to the pile. Your last thoughts are

of family and friends and your final memory is that in the beginning you were in favor of what Hitler was promoting. The now-leader of the monsters has just killed you.

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bad days
Kelly Schnepf
Selection of Merit

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organs of the clock

Seth Gilbert

Selection of Merit

Have you ever pondered the great thoughts of our time and the people who have envisioned them? Then have you considered what those people actually looked like? I would like to pose an obvious but often overlooked subject. Geniuses have a superior level of ability and yet have the worst looking hairstyles. Let us begin by examining a few notable examples.

The first, most recognizable person that comes to mind, is Albert Einstein. His name alone is synonymous with the word genius and his image is unmistakable with his wiry frizzled crop of gray hair and his bristly moustache. Einstein was considered superior among his peers for his intellectual grasp of math and science and his renowned Theory of Relativity. While spending time away from his not-so-famous physicist wife, they wrote letters to each other sharing thoughts on mathematical concepts about our universe. One would think that at the end of these letters, along with expressions of admiration and affection, were the words, "...and please, Al, get a haircut!"

Consider another great notable person, namely, Mark Twain. Like Einstein, he was a genius, but in the literary world. He

was a master with words. Also, like Einstein, he is recognizable because of his windswept, white mop of hair and big, bushy whiskers. Other people come to mind like, James Madison, one of the founding fathers of our country. He was a brilliant, forward-thinking individual concerned with democracy, but, as some have noted, not a great looking guy. Leonardo DaVinci was an inventor and artist, and one who could have easily invented a device or concoction for combing through his long unruly locks. Then we reflect on people like Frank Lloyd Wright. He was a distinguished architect designing amazingly beautiful buildings, but his own tousled tresses unfortunately had no style. Another example is Beethoven. And the list goes on.

How is it possible that these great learned men, all with,

one might say a head on their shoulders, did not possess the propensity for styling the locks on top of that head? Now let us examine a few possible causes.

First, there are physiological factors. It is a well-known fact that a genius' brain is larger than a normal human brain. It can be assumed then that the skull encasing this larger brain is bigger than normal in size. It is possible then for hair to be growing and shaping itself around this larger head giving the appearance of unruliness and lack of shape and style simply because of its size and volume. Another possible physiological factor is how the brain itself is organized. A genius' brain focuses specifically on a problem to be solved. In Beethoven's case, his mind was constantly hearing orchestrated music even after his ability to hear was gone. His desire to compose and play the piece of music in his brain was his primary focus. If the intent of the mastermind is to organize and solve the problems of greatest concern, the mathematical equation,

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geniuses and their hair
Maira Benish
Selection of Merit

invention, building, or piece of music or prose, then it stands to reason styling hair is not a problem.

This brings up the issue of time. (It's relative, you know.) One has to believe that within that fire of a genius mind there must be burning thoughts about what will be the next greatest achievement. Their world is surrounded with images of inspiration. They are too busy to think about how they look. I'm surmising that the majority of their most creative thought processes were at the moment when they looked in the mirror, reached for their comb and then suddenly, overcome with inspiration, replaced it with a pencil. (Not an appropriate styling tool.)

Taking care of the genius' 'do may have become an unimportant facet of the daily routine. There may be no desire to consult a beautician or barber and they might ignore comments made to them regarding how they look from others. Remarks and suggestions for conditioners or makeovers might provoke such brush off responses as a "Tsk!" As

if they had nothing better to do!

Finally the wiry, unkempt hair becomes too unmanageable to bother and is adopted as a part of the whole persona. The public immediately recognizes the genius by their hair. It becomes the trademark of their personalities. Why change a good thing?

In conclusion, the hallmark of the genius is wild hair. The actual effect of being born with a superior brain means having an inferior hairstyle. The next time you find yourself struggling with your brush or comb, and you end up looking similar to the photo of Einstein, you might be on your way to becoming a genius. Or, like me, you are just experiencing another "bad hair" day.

Surely, we've all heard the expression, "The best things in life are free," but are they...really? It's been my experience that this isn't always the case. To further complicate the issue, which things are actually the best things is definitely a matter of opinion.

For instance, there are many who would agree that the 'best' things fall in line with the 'finer' things, such as expensive cars, big beautiful homes, and lengthy tropical vacations. We could go a step up to include private jets, live-in kitchen staff, and personal trainers; obviously these things are not free. For the sake of argument, I will stick with those things that in the traditional sense are considered to be the best things in life.

We can begin with something everyone must have, such as water. If you reside within city limits you are familiar with the monthly water bill. If you live in the country, you have probably paid thousands of dollars for a well; furthermore, this well only brings the water into your home. If you actually want to use it for anything at all you have most likely invested in some sort of water treatment

device. Then, of course, there is bottled water. I, for one, never thought I'd see the day when we would willingly pay for bottles of water. Somehow, I'm quite sure this scenario wasn't in God's original plan.

Moving on to something a bit more personal, let us examine love. Ah, love! It's what makes the world go round, also known as attraction, desire, passion, and romance. Surely, this staple of life comes to us without a price tag attached. You cannot buy love you say. However, beginning with the first date, which can easily cost upwards of one-hundred dollars, it becomes clear that Cupid has his price. There is also the emotional price you will undoubtedly pay for engaging in this age old human instinct which includes heartache, anger, frustration, jealousy, and worry.

Of course, it's all worth it. As Shakespeare would state, "The course of true love never did run smooth," and Lord Tennyson would agree "'Tis better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all." Nevertheless, assuming that you love and win, the price tag just keeps going up. You have the ring, the engagement party, the wedding, the home, and...the baby!

In looking at God's precious 'free' gift of a tiny new life, I think everyone can see how this, too, is quite pricey. From birth to age eighteen the cost of rearing a child can be as much as \$250,000. This includes such items as the birth itself, diapers, food, clothing, medical care and child care, all prior to the major expense of college tuition. Okay, you say, how about all the joy that sweet little life brings you, or the simple delight you take in your infant's smile. Let us not disregard the rattle, or the stuffed Winnie the Pooh bear you purchased and waved around to produce that smile, or the effort you put into those faces you made.

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the best things in life are free
Francine Purgatori
Selection of Merit

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As for the joys of parenthood, oh, how we forget the sleepless nights, and the terrible twos, not to mention the sheer horror of adolescence, consisting of arguments over curfews, body piercing, and name brand apparel.

Finally, let us turn our attention to freedom. I believe we can all agree that freedom is one of the best things in life, yet it is unequivocally the most expensive 'free' commodity there is. How many have paid with their lives in the name of freedom? How many wars have been fought so we, as Americans, can live free? Well, there's the Revolutionary War, the War of 1812, the Civil War, the Spanish-American War, World War I, World War II, the Korean War, the Cold War, the Vietnam War, and the Persian Gulf War, to name a few. That's not to ignore wars in Bosnia,

Somalia, Kosovo and of course Iraq, which have not yet ended. These are just wars in which the U.S. has been involved. As you know there have been many wars, dating back to biblical times, all in the name of freedom. Thus, while freedom may appear to be 'free' to you and I as we go about our daily routines, we can certainly and more accurately say that it has a cost above all else.

There you have it, just a few of the best things in life that are by no means free. Albeit, whoever coined the phrase was not anticipating a cynic such as myself to refute it; however, further contemplation on the matter may have produced a completely different cliché, such as "The best things in life have their price," or "The best things in life are so damn expensive," or perhaps just a different take on the same words, as in "The best things in life are free?"

This winter was an unusually long string of cold, dark days. It seemed winter would never end. A pall lingered over our home as we were preparing to hold our lives together on a shoestring budget. As each segment of our lives tightened and changed, one thought helped me survive those extended gloomy days. The image of the kids and me lazily strolling through fields of warm, yellow flowers which had taken me to a brighter place. No one was cold, it was bright and sunny, and we were laughing and having fun. Winter would not last forever, and the promise of spring, and steadfast wishes for a brighter future were aglow.

Finally, spring had arrived, my kitchen was filled with an assortment of hand picked wild flowers and upon entering our home, the overpowering fragrance of lilacs delighted the senses. Everyone filled my house with flowers. Mom gave my son a few dollars to buy pink and purple daisies. There were stemless flowers from Sarah, my 5-year-old-niece; they drank water from small bowls all over the house. The exploding color of dandelions and mustard plants would grab your attention. The promise of the future was contained in those fragrant blossoms. Everything was fresh and new, and full of joy. Great wishes for bright new beginnings were at hand.

"Get a life" my best friend joked as I could hardly contain my excitement about a day enjoying dandelions with my two youngest children. An enormous smile had completely taken over my face, as I conveyed to her how much fun the kids and I had had over the weekend while capturing moments of joy. collecting dandelions. The bright yellow vibrance of these flowers made my eyes happy. The joy leaked out of the corners of my mouth and happiness was showing all over my face.

What is the first flower a loving child brings his Mom? A dandelion. Pure love, that's what these gifts are. A child with a dirty face, a bunch of dandelions, and great big smile reminds me of the

feeling I once had coming down the stairs to see if Santa had left any surprises. Little ones just burst with energy and excitement when they give bouquets to their luck recipient. The first sign of pleasant weather is a small child with a handful of sunshine to give to someone he/she loves, a special package filled with love and happy wishes.

A brilliant field full of yellow flowers just screamed out, "run here, pick me!" Every spring, I would enjoy spending time with my kids in the dandelions. For years, I have looked forward to showing my family the joys of finding flowers to fill the house. Genevieve and David, my two teenagers, have fond memories of me out there with the camera photographing two playful siblings running, picking, and laying in the dandelions. They had such a good time out there. I thought they would be with me forever, always 3 and 5 years old, and always wanting to make me smile with their hands full and brimming with dandelions. Children grow up. They don't stay little forever, but Mom will always

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picking wishes
Chris Basney
Selection of Merit

have a special place in their hearts. They will never forget the memory of spending an entire day outside just laughing, singing, and picking flowers. As they grow older, they don't have time to do silly things with Mom, like playing in flowers.

At five and eight years old, Nick and Luke think Mom is the greatest, and they can't get enough time out in the dandelion patch. The love and hope of a child can be compared to nothing. Their vision of the future is so bright, as bright as the brightest field of flowers anywhere. There is nothing more important to them than the love of that special someone in their lives. Showing that love is easy to a young person. Children have no difficulty showing their feelings and giving affection to others. Luke, always the magician, made me guess which hand had the dandelions in them, as he would hide them behind his back. He was always able to trick me and happily gave me my prize for playing along. Nick would sneak up to me with a wonderful surprise behind his back and say, "I love you Mom." He then

would give me a big kiss, and hand me dandelions. Nick's favorite thing to do was put flowers in my hair, and behind my ears. The flowers would stay behind my ears all day and when I went to work in the afternoon, everyone thought I was nuts, for I would still have the memory of the day behind my ears and yellow residue on my face.

I let my grass grow more than most people I know. We live in the woods, and no one can see our home, so yard work is low on my list of priorities. My Mom asked last Saturday if Dad and the kids would need to rake the yard when he cut the grass. "Do we still have that old hay bailer?" I seriously asked. My parents didn't think it was funny. The yard work was all done when I returned from work that night. All of the long grass and wild flowers were now in the compost pile out back. Mom said Nick was very upset with Grandpa for cutting down all of Mommy's flowers. Nick told Grandma he was saving all the dandelions for Mommy. Sunday morning, I took Nick outside to help me hang

clothes on the line. As he handed me each sock or shirt, he sadly retold the story of how Grandpa and the big kids destroyed all of the special flowers he was trying to conserve for me. I knelt down, pointed to the trees at the edge of the yard, and told him to look there. He looked and there was a short breathless pause before he hollered "Yeah, Grandpa missed those!" I had a head full of yellow again. My kitchen was again overflowing with an abundance of gold.

One might think that when the yellow was gone, the fun of picking dandelions was gone.... Nope. Now the fun is just beginning. Do you know what happens when the color fades? Wishes that's what. Bet you didn't know dandelions are chuck full of wishes. Just ask Nick and Luke, they'll tell you. Pick a big fluffy puffball of what was once a yellow splendor, hold it in front of your face, close your eyes, make some wishes and blow. How many wishes? Can you tell anyone your wishes? Will they come true? The only limit to the number of wishes

was in the imagination. Sometimes we would share our wishes, but not always. Wishes do come true, if you help them along by working toward them.

Picking wishes is my favorite thing to do in the whole world. Just yesterday, Luke was telling me: "Mom, those wishes are really seeds. Next year we'll have even more dandelions and wishes because we have spread them all over the place." After thinking about it, all of our wishes are really seeds. They are seeds of hope for the future that we share every day. Spread wishes all over, spread them everywhere, and share them sometimes. We need to remember our dreams and wishes and never give up on them. Wishes are an important dream or thought planted in our mind that we nourish with hard work and try to cultivate.

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the curves
Caroline Banka
Selection of Merit

short story winners

Richard J. Colwell Award

"Slow Leak" is a lucid, well paced fiction that reveals quietly, and with subtle power, the foreignness at the heart of even intimate relationships. Here, we find ourselves immersed in a single moment within the larger lexicon of one couple's marriage only to discover that they have lost the idiom to communicate with one another. Instead, their exchanges, tense with misfired barbs, are colored by the detailed language of fishing—where to catch a "crappie," how to preserve a "shiner" and so on—so that the story and its narrative structure begin to skillfully mirror one another; the "slow leak" that has sabotaged the couple's marriage is nothing less than a problem of language. The result is a story that must be read "between the lines" about protagonists who lack this skill themselves: an ambitious, multilayered conceit that is commandingly rendered.

First Place Winner

"Coming Home" is a coming-of-age story that examines the difficulties of finding one's place within a social sphere circumscribed by questions of class. With great sweep, the author collects a host of fully realized characters—a grandmother with blue eyebrows, an aloof father, and a host "Rotary Club Crones"—whose expectations the narrator, Elizabeth, tries to dodge, challenge, and by which, too often, she finds herself constrained. The result is an intelligent narrative that takes its time to reflect thoughtfully on the social pressures of middle America.

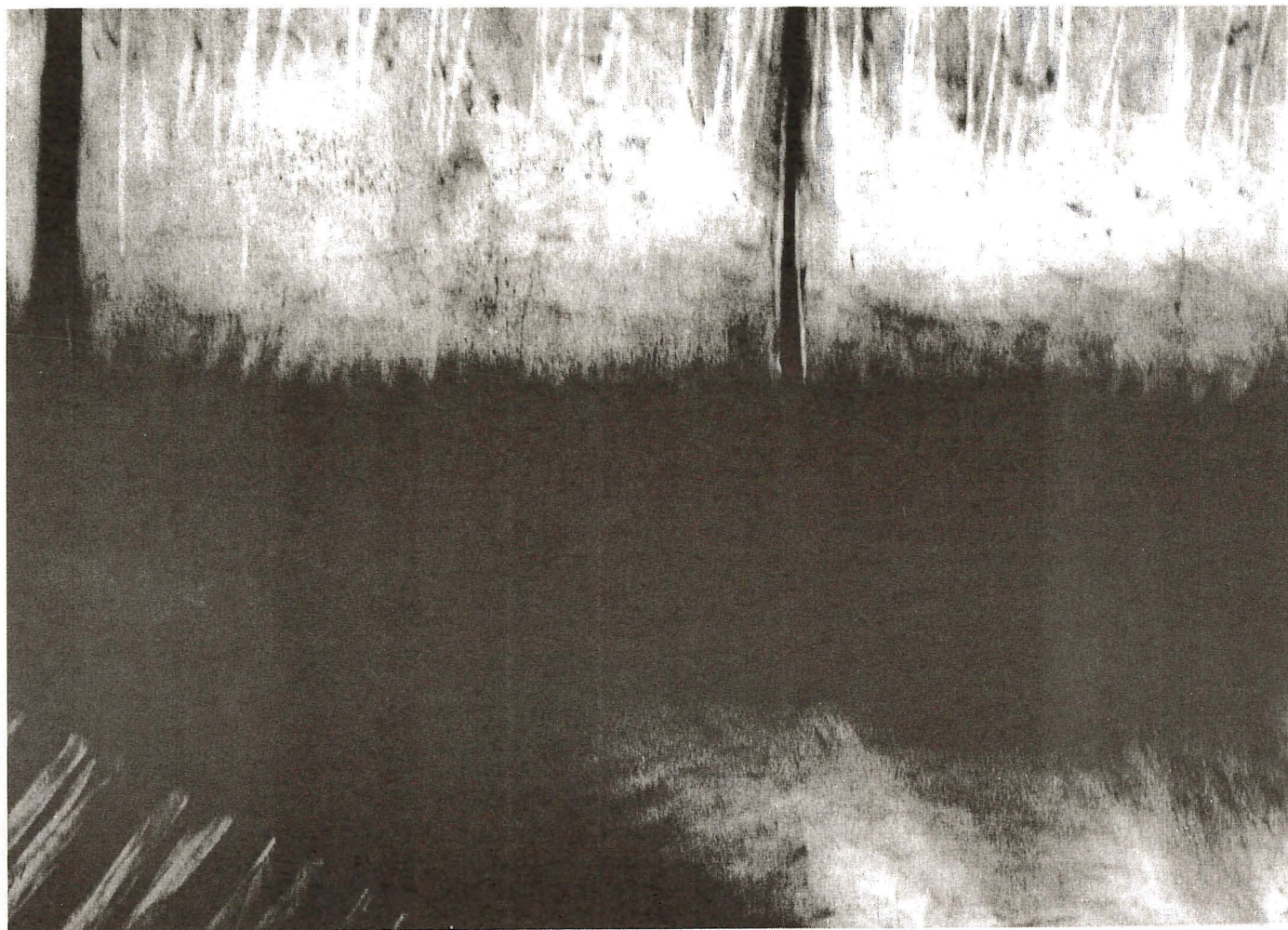
Second Place Winner

"The Resting Place" is a short fiction awash in the broad strokes of heavy sentiment—love, grief, and despair—delicately supported by compelling background details from a larger life, a more thorny narrative, only hinted at thus far. Throughout this fiction, the author demonstrates a clarity of style—an attention to the world which its protagonists have chosen to reject—so that we find ourselves in capable hands which, having painted a picaresque landscape, leave us longing for more.

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Awards
Patterns

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pieces
Tina Jensen
Selection of Merit

coming home

Samantha Hicks

It was cold. Very cold. The holidays were over, but it seemed as if winter had only just begun. It was just as well; the weather should match my disposition. I had been in some kind of self-inflicted slump since I left the University of Michigan almost a month ago. I had not planned on coming home, but home I was. Coming home had turned into my one utter failure thus far in life. Regardless, I was now attending community college.

After a full day of classes and running on merely three hours of sleep, I was unreasonably tired. So, when I walked in to find my mother and her Rotary Crones mid-meeting, assaulting the kitchen, nibbling at the cucumber sandwiches they clutched with their pudgy, gloved fingers, and glaring at me through their make-up caked lashes, I was ready to turn around and run. Unfortunately, my grandmother decided she wanted to "talk."

My Mother has been a member of the Rotary for almost twenty years now, which is a minimal amount of time in comparison to my grandmother, who has been President since Lucy, the Australopithecus Afarensis and her relatives were members. Their meetings never consisted of anything remotely intellectual besides swapping recipes and analyzing town gossip, but our house had somehow been designated as the permanent meeting hall, so I pleaded with my mother on several occasions to keep the meetings short, and for the most part, she obliged, keeping them under two and a half hours.

Once in a while, some really pressing matter would arise, like whether Ethel Fervembogger's dress complimented her skin tone or if Harriet Jones's hair was cut too short on top. On these occasions, the meetings could run anywhere from an hour to two hours longer than usual. Once, the meeting ran well into seven hours while discussing whether or not white was still fashionably acceptable for a young debutante. It was.

Talking with my grandmother is never, on any occasion, an enjoyable experience, but given my current low self-esteem

and chemical imbalance from lack of REM, the prospect of conversing with her was less than appealing. I swooped to kiss my father hello before the onslaught and then leveled my gaze, locking my dark brown eyes with her cold gray ones. Bring it on, I challenged.

She had been a pretty woman in her younger days, beautiful even. She may have even retained her looks, albeit with the steel-hardened beauty that comes with age, except she insisted on shaving off her eyebrows and drawing them in with an eye pencil a little too blue hued to be considered natural, and the regular Botox injections she received, which gave her lips and forehead a swollen look.

"Good evening, Elizabeth. How are you?" she began, with her usual regal air.

"Fine, thank you, and yourself?" I asked, unsuccessfully trying for the same regality.

"Wonderful." She replied smugly. She sensed my weakness. I expected her to bring out the heavy artillery next. "I'm so glad you're home again. You were too good for that filthy school." Ha! Was that all she had? I could handle this. I may even win this one. She had disapproved of Michigan. She wanted me to attend some fabulous women's college on the east coast, like Radcliffe or Hollins.

Then it came.

"And how is Andrew? Should I be expecting to see him sometime soon?" It stung. She brushed her dyed blonde hair from her

shoulder in a lame attempt to look preoccupied.

"You know we broke up last semester." I replied calmly, through gritted teeth.

"Oh, yes. What a shame. He was a fine young gentleman." She knew she had me. There she was, practically gloating. Looking smug as Oprah Winfrey after winning her beef defamation lawsuit. Only with blue eyebrows. And white. And old.

What really got me was that she did know. We had had the same conversation three months ago when Andrew and I had split for the third, and I was convinced, final time. Grandmother was under the impression that we had broken up due to irreconcilable differences, you know, I obviously couldn't reconcile with the fact that he was "a fine young gentleman" and I was going to a large, filthy, public school. The truth is we'd broken up because he was a complete asshole. There I was, industriously studying my youth away at Michigan, being the exemplary girlfriend, even with the many fine specimens of man-flesh all around me, and here he was, hooking up with some frail Barbie-like bimbo who appeared to have fallen out of the GAP and hit her head on the way down.

"...not like that other friend of yours, what's his name...Jason..." she continued.

Just who did she think she was to decide which boys in my life are fine young gentlemen and which ones were complete flailing assholes! Jason was my best friend and the only guy in my life who has ever deserved to be given the time of day, save my father. She had no authority to socially rank him below Andrew, the foulest member of his species. Male, that is. She narrowed her eyes for the kill.

"Well, now, don't you worry, dear. You're pretty enough. I'm sure you'll have a boyfriend again in no time."

It wasn't bad enough that I felt like a college dropout returning to attend the local community college, but now she had to make me feel like a boyfriend-less loser too?

"But I don't want—"

"How was school dear?" My mother finally cut in, sensing my supreme irritation.

"It sucked, as usual. But what am I supposed to expect?" I shot back.

"Oh, honey," she giggled. "You're always holding the high bar up and expecting others to jump over it."

"What?" I shook my head. She always said stupid things like that. Irrelevant, unimportant, confusing, and in no way helping me to look like the coy, beautiful, intelligent, men-flocking-over-me type of girl I wished I was to get my grandmother off my back. Mother sighed. Grandmother was looking at me as if she despaired of me as a homo sapien. I glared at both of them.

"Well, honey, maybe you should hang out with your friends tonight. Erin called. You seem to be turning in to quite a shut in. You don't want to neglect your social obligations."

What did she know about social obligations? I didn't see where having tea with her self-absorbed, over-dressed, eyeliner abusing friends with unfashionable hair constituted as a social obligation. Besides, she still hangs out with her mother, for Christ's sake. That can't be normal.

"Whatever. I'm leaving," I announced, too tired for any continued interrogation. I felt the eyes of all the mindless cattle watching me in awe as I stomped out.

"Where are you going, dear?" My mother called after me.

"I'm going for high-velocity transcortical lead therapy."

"What do you suppose that means?" one of the Rotary cattle mused.

"It means she's going to shoot herself in the head." I heard my father mumble in answer, without looking up from the paper he was reading.

I dashed up to my room, still in a fury, and despite my overpowering mental and physical exhaustion, I decided to call Erin back, in an attempt to not seem like a rude, ungrateful bitch, but having every intention of politely declining her invitation to participate in any semblance of hanging out tonight.

Ring! Ring! "...Hello?"

"Erin?" I answered. "It's Lizzie."

"Oh hey, girl! How are you I haven't seen you in like forever..."

Oh God, someone please shoot me. Please. I can't deal with this, not now. She's going to throw the old 'I miss you sooo much' bit.

"... and I miss you sooo much so you like totally have to come to my party tonight. Everybody is going to be there..."

Just say no. That's all you need to do. No thanks. Hanging out with drunken fools, pretending to be having a marvelous time, and probably seeing Andrew and his new whorish, Barbie-like, skinny, tanned, CK-1 smelling girlfriend was not my idea of a good time in my current state of exhaustion. Nor did I want to explain to a hundred different people why exactly I had come home from Michigan, especially when I couldn't remember the reason myself! No, my idea of fun was sleeping. Forever. Just say no.

"Okay. What time?" I replied.

What the hell is wrong with me?

I arranged to meet at her house in a half hour, and then hung up the phone. As usual, idiocy decided to become my sole patron and bestow all its unwanted largesse upon me. Ah well, hanging out with my friends couldn't be worse than staying home with the abominable matriarchs of my family, or being forced to take my little sister and her friends to yet another movie where the

main character befriends a whale or learns the value of recycling.

Maybe I should change. I was still wearing the sweatshirt and jeans I had thrown on this morning in my blind scurry to make it to class on time. I glanced at myself in the mirror.

Oh, God, look at me. No wonder I'm a complete boyfriend-less loser. I'm short, ugly, and completely unfashionable. And fat. I'm like 400 pounds!" I would be lucky to score a date with the Beast from the Disney classic, Beauty and the Beast. At least he would have a slim chance of outweighing me! Nobody wants a date who weighs more than they do!

I was getting brutal.

I decided to screw changing. I had nobody to impress. I got in my car and drove the five miles to Erin's house. What I saw was not encouraging. Andrew and Barbie were walking across the lawn toward the house.

"You can do this," I told myself. I had just turned off my lights and reached for the door handle of my car when a flock of squealing high school girls ran toward Barbie, I'm assuming in some sort of greeting, because she then squealed in response and hugged each one of them. Andrew looked quite overwhelmed, I was pleased to notice. There was one thing he hadn't reckoned on when he ditched me for that trashy bitch: they always come with scores of equally trashy friends who never wear enough skirt, and sport even trashier bleached-blond hair. I have come to find that these rules apply everywhere and are really quite profound, they flock the streets of L.A. and crowd the shores of Malibu; they are quite inescapable. And it looked like Barbie was the leader of her pack. Hanging out with them must have been like Rotary Club 24/7.

Just then, Andrew glanced over and saw me. He had such a look of despair on his face, I almost felt bad for him, almost, until I remembered that he had left me for that. You made your bed, now lie in it, I gleamed triumphantly. He started to walk toward me.

I can't do this. I restarted my car and backed out of Erin's driveway, she would understand, and headed to the one place I knew would bear no reminder of what a complete loser and utter failure I was: Jason's house.

Jason and I had been friends since before either of us could talk. He was the closest thing I had to a brother and the smartest person I knew. When I arrived I let myself in, as usual, and found Jason parked in front of the TV, watching some new reality show.

"Hey," he smiled. "Long time, no see. What's wrong?"

"Nothing," I lied as I plopped down next to him and reached for the popcorn.

His summer blue eyes regarded me for a moment before he

shrugged and turned back toward the TV. We watched Evan and Zora on Joe Millionaire for a while as they received \$1 million and an all-expense paid trip to the Caribbean.

"It's not fair!" I exclaimed, breaking the silence and startling Jason back into reality. "Why can't my life be like that? Simple, easy, worry free—"

I was cut off by Jason's barking laughter.

"Lizzie, you know this crap is fake!" He shook his blonde head.

"Life isn't really like this! Besides, these people worry plenty!

After they make it big on the show, they have to constantly worry about staying popular, what they say, who they're seen with, what they wear...kinda like you..." he broke off chuckling.

"I do not worry about that ephemeral bullshit!" I was appalled that he would even think it.

"Sure you do..." he continued as if I hadn't just erupted.

"Remember that time you spent 4 hours at that salon, making sure they gave you the right shade of blonde, or that time you changed clothes 72 times before your mother's Annual DAR Barbeque...oh, and when you and Andrew went out for the first time and you put on so much perfume I had to bring over two fans to air you out before he arrived..."

Horrorstricken, I tuned him out. I did remember all those times, all those and more. I remembered the first time I had made a salon appointment, trying to keep up with the latest hair fashion, the numerous times I had dressed up to impress a guy, and the countless times I had changed myself in a futile attempt to impress my grandmother. I was no different than Barbie and her pack of bimbos, or my grandmother and her Rotary Cattle.

I always worried about what other people thought of me. I was afraid my friends would think I was a loser for leaving Michigan, afraid my grandmother thought I was an incurable anti-socialite, afraid Barbie would judge me as the fashion-oblivious girl who lost her boyfriend to a worthier opponent and spent my days bitterly sulking over the loss. I allowed myself to be dubbed a loser based on the standards of a society I outright despised. And not only was I judging myself, I was judging everybody else by the same harsh, mindless standards!

I glanced back to the TV screen as Zora and Evan awkwardly sat beside each other on the plane to their all-expense paid Caribbean vacation. They don't even like each other. Why would anyone put themselves in that situation? I turned to Jason, who had gone back to intently watching the screen.

"Jay?" I asked, breaking his concentration again. "Would you ever go on one of these shows?"

"Nah," he said without hesitation. "It's like I told you, the people are only in it for the fame and fortune. They're trying to escape reality, give themselves a new identity. Take Zora for example; did

you know she was a struggling porn star before the show? All America sees now is a millionaire in the Caribbean! Who she was, what she did, it's all irrelevant. She has become who she portrayed herself as on the show."

I nodded blankly, lost in thought. Maybe we all change ourselves on the outside to hide our insecurities. Maybe Barbie and her posse were just as insecure as I was and attempted to hide it beneath bleached blonde hair and mindless babble. Maybe Ethel Fervenbogger was self-conscious about her complexion. Maybe even my grandmother struggled for acceptance. It couldn't be easy, what with blue eyebrows and all. Maybe we all portrayed ourselves to be someone other than who we are, someone society would deem more acceptable.

I stretched as I pondered this new outlook. We all want the same thing, to be loved, to be accepted for who we are, to be viewed as special and unique, capable of making the right life-choices. Nobody wants their flaws exposed, to have their deepest wounds and regrets picked at by the people closest to them. No, I yawned, in the end we are all the same.

I laid my head in Jason's lap and he began to absentmindedly stroke my hair, still watching, more intent than ever as Evan learned of Zora's past porn career.

"That's the trouble," I muttered, "that's what happens when you don't accept people for who they are and judge them by society's standards."

"Shhh..." Jason whispered,

I smiled as I drifted off to sleep. It was good to be home.

slow leak

Grace Vermeer

The man waited in the boat, a tackle box and rod beside him, his hat casting a shadow over his eyes. A galvanized bucket full of bait sat between his feet. He opened a small, white packet and sprinkled it into the bucket.

"What's that?" the woman said.

"Bait Saver," said the man. "It reduces stress; keeps the shiners alive. They're sensitive when it's hot like this."

"Sensitive? Shiners are sensitive? Oh, that's sweet." She turned her back to the man, stuffed her hands in her hip pockets and looked over at the green, stagnant scum floating along the edge of the water.

"Hey. Kathy! You coming or not?" The man pushed his hat back. His hair was wet where the rim of his hat had been. She turned and walked toward the boat. "I'm coming, but I still think this boat's a piece of junk."

The boat lurched and she clutched the side, plopping down on the weathered plank.

"Good grief!" She jerked her hand away and glared at the splinter embedded in her thumb. "What'd I tell you? The wood's practically rotten."

"I said, it'll be fine, dear."

The man picked up the oars and began to row out across the expansive lake. The air was hot and oppressive, an anxious heat before a storm. The woman sighed and wiped her forehead. She peered over the edge of the boat, dragging her fingers along the surface of the deep murky water, the path of ripples spreading out behind her, the oars dipping and scraping.

"There it is," said the man. "The perfect spot." A fallen tree was toppled in the deep water beneath the brushy bank. "Crappies like flooded brush."

"Your father called them papermouths," she said. "Remember that, Bill? Or bachelor perch."

The man stopped rowing and let the boat drift, shifting his back towards the woman.

"Oh my gosh," said the woman, lifting her feet. "The boat's leaking."

He rigged his pole with a small float, split shot, and a simple hook baited with a shiner. "It's fine, dear," he said flatly.

"Stop it. Stop calling me 'dear.' You only say that when you want me to shut up."

He fixed his eyes on the fallen tree. "Be quiet. You'll scare the fish." The problem was this. Crappies shied away from any strange disturbance. Technique was critical: keep your distance, avoid inessential movements or noise and use the lightest line possible.

"We've been through this before. You know you never say it unless you want me to shut up." She picked up the tote bag by her feet.

"The bottom's all wet."

"Don't worry about it," he said. "It's leaked for years."

The woman shaded her eyes and squinted across the pond. A kingfisher swooped low, its harsh, shrill call rising above the incessant drone of insects.

"Look," he said. "If you're worried, I'll row you to shore. You can wait there."

"I'm not worried." She glanced down at her feet, picking at her nails.

The boat drifted toward the brush. There was another problem with crappies. They liked to hide in the thick, dense branches. Snags were a constant problem. The man used a long pole and dropped the bait precisely into the opening without getting snagged. He smiled to himself. You're good, Bill. Years of practice, man. He looked over his shoulder at his wife. She was staring at the wet boards.

"You can't tell if it's leaking by staring at it," he said. "It's just a slow leak."

The woman reached back and gathered her hair, lifting it off her wet, sticky skin. She tilted her face up toward the sweltering sky. It refused to be ignored. The clouds were massing heaps; white, swelling caravans against brazen blue, a changing entourage.

"Cumulous clouds."

"What?" he said.

"It might storm tonight," she said.

Along the banks of the lake, the birch trees hung limp and mute, bent over their listless reflections. The water had risen over the years, swallowing the edges of the dark, lush woods. Now there were trees standing in the water, some bare and gray.

"They're dying," she said.

"What?" He watched a crappie, motionless.

"The trees," she said. They're drowning." The raucous scolding of a blue jay rang out over the lake.

"How long does it take?" she asked.

"Hmmm?" he said.

"How long does it take for a tree to drown, when it stands in water like that?"

"Don't know," he said. "Maybe years. Could be less."

The woman bit her lower lip and stared at the trees, the ones that were dead. They lifted their arms like pointless, old prophets. She shaded her eyes and looked back at the clouds. She sat quietly and watched them move and change.

"I used to like painting clouds," she murmured. "But that was a long time ago."

"Damn fish. They're not biting at all." He put fresh bait on his hook and lowered it carefully. It was important to lower the bait right in front of the crappies, or sometimes they refused to bite.

"You don't listen to me, do you?"

"What?" he said.

"You've never really listened to me, have you?"

"What are you talking about?" A mosquito whined in his ear and he slapped at it, rocking the boat and sending little eddies across the water.

"I don't know why I keep lying to myself." She swiveled around and glanced down at the bottom of the boat. The water had risen, ever so slightly.

"OK. That's it," he said. "I'm finding a different spot." He drew in his line and propped the rod beside him.

"Why don't you just row me to shore while you're at it?"

"Why? What's the matter?"

"Nothing's the matter," she said. "I just want you to row me to shore."

"You still worrying about the stupid, little leak?"

"No," she said and looked away in the distance. "Not that one, anyway."

The sun hung low in the sky, a big ball of fire in the stifling air.

"I'll row over to the north shore," he said. "There should be good fishing along that brushy strip."

"I want to go back to the dock."

"What for?" he said.

"Just row me to the dock," she said. She stared at him and then looked down at the water, running the tips of her fingers along the surface. She could see the billowing clouds in the reflection.

"It'll be cooler on the north side of the lake."

"Tell me," she said. "When have you ever taken me seriously?"

"What? I always take you seriously."

She reached for the oars.

"Whatever," he said, and rolled his eyes.

She rowed across the lake without speaking. The boat clunked against the dock, scraping along the side. She gathered her bag and shoes, hanging onto the side of the boat as she stepped out.

"Goodbye," she said, without looking at him. She walked up the grassy slope toward the pickup truck.

He looked puzzled. "Where you going? I thought you wanted to wait on the dock?"

"I'm going to paint clouds."

"Well, make sure you pick me up by ten," he yelled as she opened the door of the truck and started to climb in.

When the storm broke loose at midnight, he started walking.

the resting place

Kenton K. Maki

She watched the water swirl from beneath the determined oar. She listened to the swishing of the water that was stirred from each stroke. The lake was strangely quiet for such a gorgeous day. Birds chirped every now and then, but other than the sounds of the oar breaking the water, the lake was silent.

The air was also still. The woman drew in long breaths of air, but no matter how much air she took in, it still didn't feel like enough.

She felt her shoulders pleading her to stop rowing. She had felt them very shortly after leaving the dock. "Fifty years ago," she thought. "I could do this without a problem."

She glanced down at the water and caught a glimpse of her reflection among the ripples. Her hand went to her face and she ran her finger across the deep creases marching across her face.

She looked over at her husband who was sitting in the seat across from her, staring out onto the tree line. She thought of her wedding day. She had never guessed that she would grow to be so old... or tired.

"Where are we going?" he suddenly asked her.

Shocked by the break in the calming silence, it took her a moment to gather words. "We are going away," she said quietly. A tear streamed down her right cheek.

"Oh," he replied, again staring blankly moments later.

Looking into her husband's eyes, she caught a glimpse of her son who had passed away years earlier. She smiled at a memory of the pair leaving for a baseball game.

"What are you smiling about?" asked the man of his wife's grin. "I am thinking about you and Bobby going to his first little league game. Do you remember that? He was so excited."

The man's face lit up at the mention of his son. "Do you think him and the wife would want to come up for Thanksgiving this year?"

"We'll see," said the woman. "We'll see."

She looked around at the lake and stopped rowing; deciding that this spot would make a nice resting place.

"Where are we going?" the man asked his wife.

The woman looked down at the water trickling over her toes and replied, "We are going to go see Bobby."

"Oh," said the man.

She began sobbing, so the man reached out for her and clutched her face to his chest. He ran his hands through her whitened hair.

"Shhh...", he said. "It's okay. Maybe we will see him at Thanksgiving. Maybe him and the wife will come and spend it with us."

The woman clutched her husband even tighter. Through tears, she whispered, "I love you."

The water slowly crept up to her ankle.

6²



evening silhouette

Kimberly Steinhoff
Selection of Merit

Did I enjoy my day? Oh, yeah. It was great. It's evening, and the daughter is making dinner. A rare thing seeing as she doesn't cook; though this isn't cooking, it's opening a box. Still, I don't have to do anything and it smells good. Maybe it's better because none of the effort is mine. She let the rice do its absorb thing and went over to the piano and plunked out a tune from Toy Story. Shame she doesn't play more often, she's very good and had for years planned on pursuing music in college but now .. librarian. Not sure what to make of that but now isn't the time to suss it out; I've a headache and the furnace guy charged me \$115 to tell me he needs to actually see the thing fail before he can diagnose the problem. I'll show you fail how about a nice rubber check?

The day started out at 6 a.m. when the daughter got up, but I couldn't bring myself to get out of bed. Parts of me made half-hearted attempts but they never unionized, so we all just lay there and listened to the radio. Eventually I got up but the body parts protested. What a bunch of whiners. Made calls, had prescriptions refilled, called furnace guy and a recommended car shop. I've been putting off calling anyone because all I need done is a good going over to get it ready for winter. But winter is nigh, so I called and got a young sounding guy. I asked, "You've got a some kind of feckless female plan there?"

"A ..a ..a.....aaaa. What?"

"Feckless Female Plan, you know .. where you go over my van and check all sorts of ga-nob an ga-dial'd monitored things ... oil, tranny, tires, brakes, belts. You know, like you'd do for your wife, only you charge for it."

Muffled young guy voice, "Uh, Bill, we got a feckless female plan? " Bill, "A WHAT? Must be a joke, dammit, just hang up."

Young guy answers anyway, "We can do a check of all your systems which includes things like belts, brakes, fittings, and the like. Prices vary according to what you want done." He quotes me a couple prices. I figure it's not a bad deal but want to check out a few more still.

I ran my list of errands, (including a very angry exchange at the bank because they won't send me my cancelled checks any more), did the grocery shopping, and took notice of the many snow fences already up. A quick stop at the gas station for a fill then inside to pay, where I encounter the trainee. I endure the slowness inherent in all trainees for a bit then asked the manager about their Feckless Female plan. She gave me a list of what they check (and it's mighty long) but has never had anyone ask for just the check, it's something they do standard with other work, such as oil changes. She showed me a coupon for an oil change and went back to find out how much for just the check. I heard laughter and someone ask, "What does 'feckless' mean??" Answered by, "You jerk!" Meanwhile, trainee is familiarizing herself with the computer/register .. bweep. bweep. Um, what about this key .. bweep.

I decide to walk over to the soup kitchen and I find it's ... a kitchen, from which you serve yourself soup, to go. I get a bowl

6

leather in the wind

Sue Sidelinger

Selection of Merit

of beef noodle and an egg salad sandwich and carry them away in a brown paper bag. For some reason I'm reminded of pranksters who would put pooh in brown paper bags and set them afire on porches. I pass the bar where not long ago I had to peel The Barfly off my person; I debated over going in to practice pool. I decided to walk on, and headed for a little park on the main street and sat eating my lunch while watching traffic go by. A great number of semi's passed as well as cops (which turned out to be just one cop, going around in circles. Only in a small town).

Lunch was actually pretty good, and on my way back to the van I stopped in the hardware store and bought a tire pressure gauge. I told the guy he shouldn't be inside on such a nice day, that he could at least go outside and pretend to sweep the sidewalk. He laughed and the paranoid part of my brain was sure it was directed at my hair and its very first dye job. Radiant red, according to the package. I decided I'd spent enough time in

town so I got in my van and went home. It really was a nice, warm, 50 degree day. Probably the last one for a while. Furnace guy wasn't due to arrive for another 90 minutes and I wasn't going to sit around and wait, I was....

... going for a ride. (and here you must imagine me standing very supermanish with my hands on hips, face looking skyward.) I'm the superhero .. Motorcycle Mama. Fifteen minutes later found me clad in black jeans, leather chaps, black leather boots denim jacket with black leather vest over, black, mirror sunglasses and black leather gauntlet gloves. I'm very intimidating in my leathers; to onlookers there's no question what I'm up to, this is not the outfit one wears to mow the lawn or go get a manicure. This is an outfit one wears to be in the wind, ride like a she devil and tempt fate... I mount my trusty steed, insert the key, open the choke, twist the throttle and press the start button. Whrrrrr weeeerrrr r cough sputter sputter vr .. vr

It's not been ridden for a while, but it starts on the second try... oooooom! This would be so much more impressive if it were a kick start but let's face it, a start button is easier. I let the engine warm, adjust the enrichener and lock up the barn. Helmet on (hate the thing) and I glide down the drive and wait for traffic to clear. In my mind runs a dialogue on the proper handling and treatment of the bike while still 'cool'. In my mind also runs a list of warnings (in a nutshell, don't be stupid, motorcycles are dangerous)... traffic clears, I pull out gently and... sputterrrrr sput .. Oh No You Don't! Stalling is strictly verboten; I pull in the clutch, twist on the throttle and convince the bike it wants to go. As soon as she stops coughing I open 'er up and am doing 70 before I get to the first road west of me... less than a quarter mile.

So much for the proper treatment of the bike, but at least I burned all the carbon off... heh.

This is glorious. I love the feel of being in the wind, I grin with half my mouth and breathe deeply through my nose so I can sample the air. Someone's

laundry is in the dryer, there's fried chicken being prepared... the distinct acrid smoke of leaves burning. The motor rumbles beneath me, wind rushes up, and I'm carried away into a world you just can't sample while hermetically sealed in a car. I pass a truck and turn south onto the main road, take the curves smoothly and quickly, my mind falling into well practiced focus on traffic, road debris, speed, and lean of the bike. I make out a quick mental map of the route I want to take which will include both tight curves and long, straight distances for high speed.

Five miles south is the first traffic light, I turn west and am behind a big, new, white pickup... I can tell it's a young guy driving but he's not accelerating fast enough. I'm in second gear and could park my front wheel in the bed of his truck he's going so slow. No oncoming traffic... I pull out and let her speed to the limit of the gear. As I shift I'm neck n neck with the driver and he's speeding up... a race! I look to my right, casually,

and when I see he's looking back, I kiss the air between us, smile and open up. He's soon nothing but a bright speck in my rear view yeeeha! kids, they think they know it all. Ha! I laugh with all of my mouth.

As I descend down a steep hill, I let off the throttle and bring her back down to 70; as I climb the next hill I let gravity slow me down so by the time I crest the top I'm down to 60. Five over the posted isn't too bad and I do need to be mindful of cops. The bright speck behind me gets larger, but I turn north at the next light (five miles from the last) and head for the expressway. But between here and there are two hairpin curves, and with luck I'll not get stuck behind some constipated cage driver. My mind pops its warning of possible gravel in the road, as is often the case because of the many dirt shoulders and gravel roads. I approach the first curve and eyeball the road; I determine it has gravel well into the lane so I adjust my speed. Drats. But the second is clear,

I accelerate... lean... and coming out the other side I'm like an arrow, slicing the air effortlessly with precision and bladed speed. I straighten the bike and breathe deeply again the air offered up; it's heady with cow manure, hay and fresh turned soil. Man, this is great. I pull the handle bar down quick and hard to the left, then right, left... then right. It freaks drivers but I like to do this swerving when there's nothing in the road, it's good practice for when there is. I pass a delivery truck... a car... a tandem... gravel and dirt needle the skin on my face. As I pass I look down at drivers and up at truckers... smiling. Some smile back, others don't like to be passed, and glare. I leave them behind as I make my way to where I can open her up so hard she screams. I like the rumbling of the engine and pipes, They are like imps of energy. I used to have louder pipes and for fun I'd go into parking lots and reverberate up and down the rows. When I left, I'd have set off more than 60% of the car alarms.

Before the highway are two nice rolling curves through which I gently lean like a seductive dancer; a group of trees border each side still sporting their colorful fall jackets and I can smell them, and they are autumn.

The entrance ramp is long and allows me to get well above the speed limit before merging with eastbound traffic, which is light, and I weave my way between a few close-knit semi's and I'm in the clear. While accelerating I pull down the highway pegs with my toes, and keep accelerating. It's like listening to a singer see just how long she can hold one note. On and on I go, the needle reaches 90... cold air peaks under the hem of my chaps and jeans and rushes up to say hello to my legs; I squeeze my thighs tight to the seat to halt its greeting, and it has to content itself with hovering and swirling around my knees. 95... the soles of my feet are assaulted by hammering wind and threaten to come off the pegs, I point them. 100 ... I pass an old man in a rusty truck, he grins at me as I

blur past; his face is caught by my eye and is a photograph in my memory. 105... the engine begins to protest and I remember the last time I cut loose

That day I had stopped at a gas station and purchased a box of candy cigarettes; nothing is cooler than a leather-clad biker smoking while riding. I'd suck the sweet confection and shape the wet end with my tongue. This is a time to mess with people's minds and when I began passing a car I'd noticed children in the back seat. Children thrill with a fearful delight when bikes pass, so I slowed down to match the speed of the car. I could read their lips, "Mommy, Daddy, look! It's a girl!" Fearful parents stared forward but kids are little encouragers and these waved at me and grinned, made faces... I laughed and rolled the cigarette around, making sure they saw it... then sucked it in, chewed it, and swallowed it before speeding up and leaving them to ponder over that for a lifetime.

110 .. my bike pleads with

me to rein in and respect its limits, but I ignored it until I'd passed a few more large, lumbering trucks. How exhilarating and refreshing to let loose some of the pent up feelings; there's nothing which matches this raw, exposed speed. Going down to 75 felt like I was crawling, and at those speeds, my exit came up quick. Getting back on to 55 mph roads was worse still, and I had to keep a close eye on the speedometer to make sure it stayed around sixty.

It had been a while since I last tooled down this road and the first tight curve came up fast, and I was going too fast. I pulled down hard on the grips and leaned, my body slightly over to the other side. The kickstand ground a new groove in the cement and the exhaust pipe sparked as it dragged its chrome nail over the pavement; I hoped the kicker didn't catch in a rut and spin me into oblivion. It's a two part curve, first a hard left, then right so I do a quick and smooth shift of my weight and accelerate; I marvel at how it all stayed in balance and we

never crossed into the other lane. My mind perceived everything in vivid repose giving it the feeling of taking a few minutes to get through, but in reality it was over in seconds. Shit stupid thing to do, but I was on the other side, safe and...

... that was fun! A tiny voice in the back of my mind was gleefully begging, "Do it again, do it again!" Nope. The second curve is just like the first, only a hard right then left, which I take it at a respectful speed before heading into a town five miles south of my house. It's a drugged 25 mph in town, and I take short cuts through side streets to avoid the main roads so I can get ahead of the many semi's I saw converging at the light. I get onto the main road heading north, semi's behind me, and the curves ahead of me (four strung together) are child's play, but a car heading south flashes frantic lights... cop ahead. I do the speed limit, which is aggravating, and get home just as my son is hopping off the school bus.

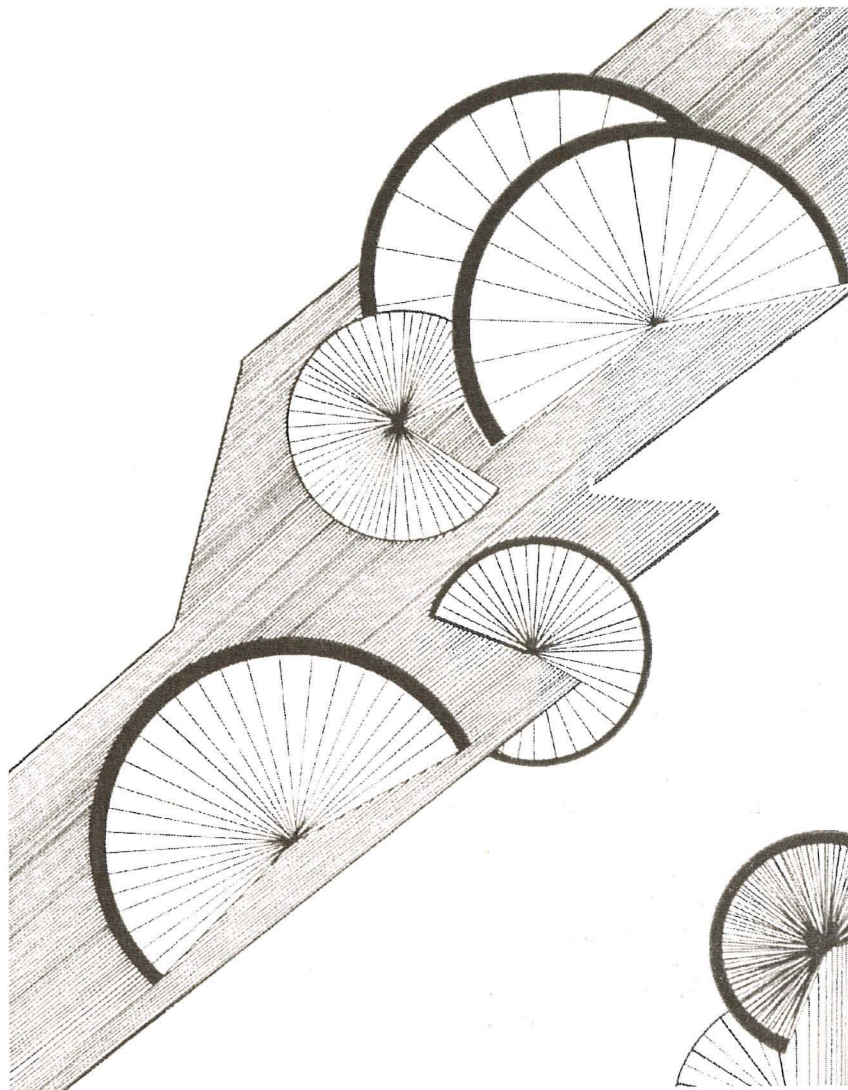
The son asks if I'm done

riding for the day, he wants to park it in the barn. Any excuse to get on my motorcycle; the kid wants to ride when he's of age and I try to tell him it's very dangerous. I think of the peril of that one curve and know he'd never be able to handle it; he needs more tempering, and that takes time. My intent was to ride more after the furnace guy left so I left it out. The son looked at my bike as it sat there with its cooling, popping and crackling engine, "You enjoy your ride?"

I smile with half my mouth in an evil, superhero Motorcycle Mamma grin.

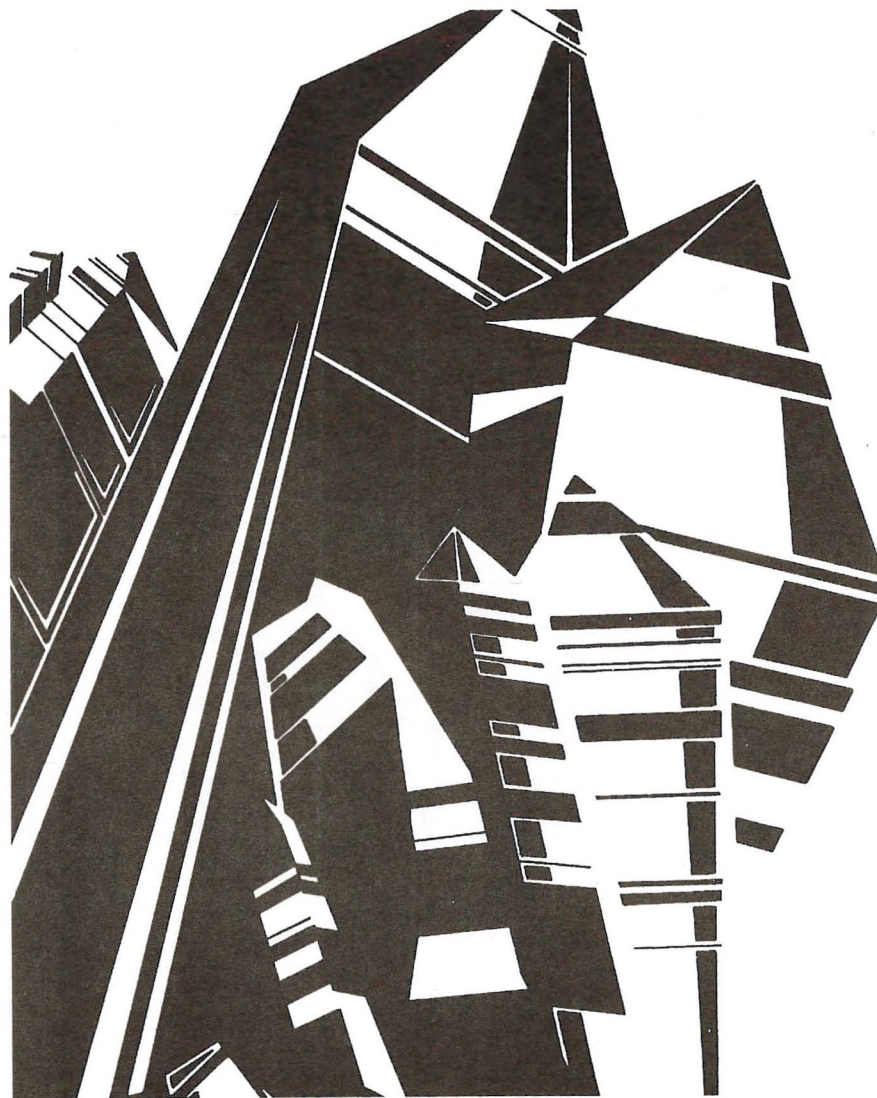
Oh, yeah. It was great.

600



in the woods

Glenn Oliver
Selection of Merit



6

triumph
Holly Barth
Selection of Merit

70



untitled

Michelle Seaman

Selection of Merit



7

juice squeezer
Jessica Munro
Selection of Merit
w/heart



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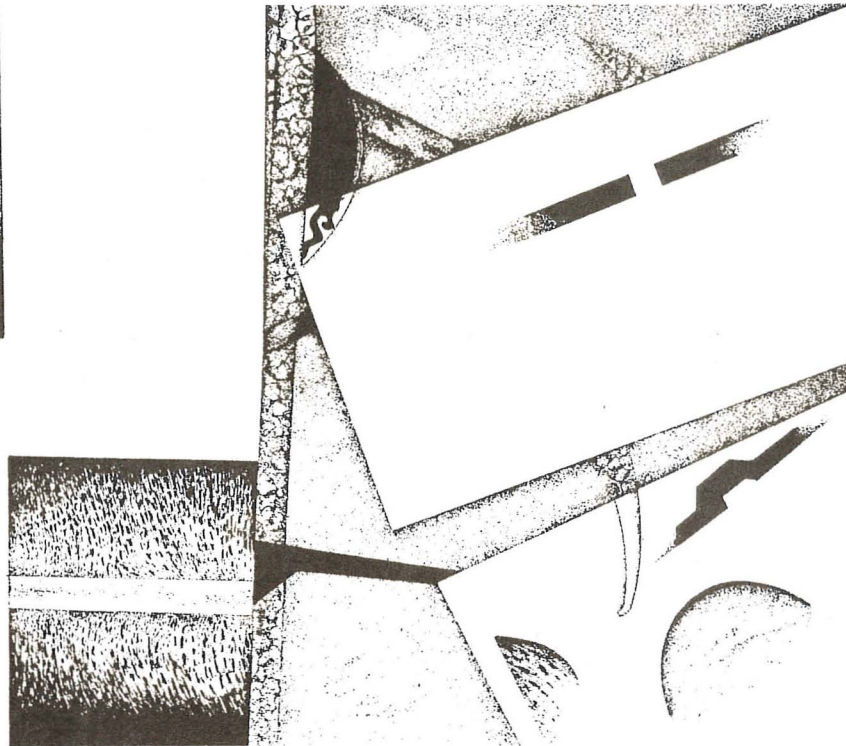
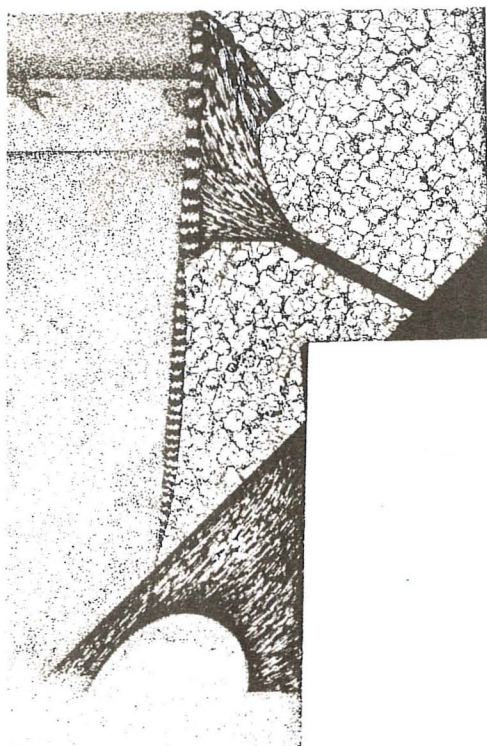
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Christine Hume's first book *Musca Domestica* (Beacon Press 2000) won the Barnard New Women Poets Prize. Her work has been included in anthologies such as *Best American Poetry 1997* and *American Poetry: the Next Generation*. Recent poetry has appeared in *Agni*, *American Letters and Commentary*, *The Iowa Review*, *McSweeney's*, *New American Writing*, and *The Paris Review*. Her article "Enlarging / the last lexicon / of perception" in *Ann Lauterbach's Framed Fragments* will be published in *Women Poets in the 21st Century* this year by Wesleyan University Press. Her teaching and research interests include exploring the intersections between science and poetry, documentary poetics, ekphrasis, Emily Dickinson and her legacy, and literary hybridity. She has received grants and fellowships from Colorado Council on the Arts, the Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown, the Fund for Poetry, Rocky Mountain Women's Institute, Writers at Work, and the Wurlitzer Foundation.

Christina Milletti's fiction has appeared in several journals and anthologies, most recently in *The Greensboro Review*, *Harcourt's Best New American Voices*, *Scribner's Best of the Fiction Workshops*, *The Chicago Review*, and *13th Moon*. Recently, novelist Paul West devoted a chapter to her fiction in his book *Master Class* (Harcourt 2001). She has received a Thayer Fellowship from the New York Foundation of the Arts, and was granted a residency at the Fundación Valparaíso, an artist colony in Mojácar, Spain. She has written a collection of short stories called *The Religious and Other Fictions*, and is now at work on a novel *Room in the Hotel America*. Her dissertation, *Innovative Ends: Gender and the Poetics of Transformation in Women's Experimental Fiction*, examines the intersections of gender, performance, and speech act theory in the work of twentieth century women writers. Her teaching interests include: creative writing, theories of writing (poetics), hypertext and digital studies, twentieth century fiction, women's literature, feminist theory, and the history of the novel.



74



dreaming of the sea

Leonid Grinberg

Selection of Merit

THIS BOOK WAS DESIGNED by Sarah Ahlquist and Catherine Steinborn, students of St. Clair County Community College Communication Design Program, and printed in the College Print Shop.

75

The type faces are Palatino Regular and Palatino Italic designed by Hermann Zapf. They were chosen to accompany the elegant Zapfino designed by the same artist. The other title face is the bold sans-serif Gill Sans, designed by Eric Gill, that adds contrast to the refined Zapfino.

The text paper is Domtar Solutions Soft White Super Smooth, and the cover paper is Carnival Vellum Coco and Deep Blue.

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